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ABSTRACT

This two-part collection presents 59 short essays by a cross-section of college instructors nationwide in response to four questions about writing students and five questions about writing teachers. Part I presents the responses to the following student-oriented questions: What are the common and special needs of writing students (including remedial students, those for whom English is a second language, and adult learners)? What motivates students and what are their responsibilities in learning how to write? How is student writing to be assessed and measured? What characterizes acceptable writing? Part II presents the responses to the following teacher-oriented questions: Who are writing teachers? What are the characteristics and responsibilities of good writing teachers? What are the philosophical issues that a writing teacher should confront? What methodologies and strategies have proven valuable in teaching writing? What kinds of materials and what course plans are useful in teaching writing? The essays, letters, and reports that are presented were chosen to reflect a cross-section of information that would be useful to faculty and administrators. The monograph concludes with a bibliography. (JP)

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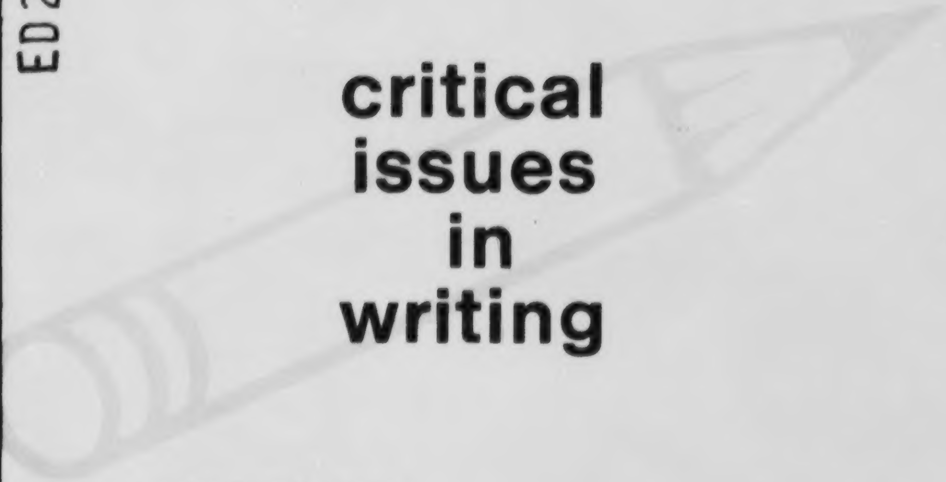

# critical issues in writing

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# NETWORKS

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# critical issues
# in
# writing

This special publication of Networks has been sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

# PREFACE

*Critical Issues in Writing* represents the culmination of our three year collaboration with the Fund. Like its predecessor, *Critical Issues in Tutoring*, this volume has been designed for and draws from the work of practitioners. Whereas relatively little has been written about tutoring however, few areas have been as well researched as writing. Yet we were aware that a great deal of quality work has been completed very recently, within the past five years, and felt that there was a need to pull together some of the best essays from around the country. Landmark books such as Mina Shaughnessy's brilliant *Errors and Expectations* may be widely known, but few of us have the time to review all the literature or the finances to attend every conference.

With this general goal in mind, we invited several faculty in the northeast to advise us on how best to proceed. Our guests, Stephen Adolphus, Kenneth Bruffee, Laraine Fergenson, Garlie Forehand, Betsy Kaufman, Patricia Laurence, Elaine Maimon, Barbara Shollar, Virginia Slaughter, Regina Solinger, and Richard Sterling were very helpful. They proposed that we phrase and group key questions about writing students, writing faculty and writing programs, then invite a broad cross-section of expert faculty to prepare fresh answer-essays or, if previous essays spoke to the questions, to send us the prior work. We also encouraged faculty to send local memoranda or materials that seemed applicable to our mission. The panel recommended distinguished faculty from across the country for us to contact.

Following their advice, we solicited responses from over 125 faculty and were deluged with papers and information from more than 65 persons who responded within our very tight time restrictions. We chose essays, reports and letters that interested us and that seemed to reflect a cross-section of information that would be useful to faculty and administrators. Because of budget constraints, some excellent replies from distinguished practitioners have not been included.

In addition to the on-going help provided by our Advisory Committee, we appreciate the encouragement and good sense of Bob Fullilove, our Program Officer at the Fund. We drew lavishly upon the experience and expertise of Barbara Schaier, Networks' Assistant Director and editor of last year's volume on tutoring. We are also grateful to Camille Nelson, our Secretary, who typed the manuscript with her usual care and competence. We are indebted to Sarah Ocasio, Assistant to the Director, for her close reading of essays, her knowledge of support services and for her careful work on our bibliography. Finally, my deepest thanks to Annette Allen, Networks' indefatigable editor. She has been the indispensable driving force behind this volume and without her imagination, excellent judgement and hard work, it simply would not have been published.

Richard A. Donovan, Director

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# INTRODUCTION

Though all living creatures have ways of communicating, only *human* consciousness creates knowledge and transmits it in a written code. These encodings, stored on stone tablets, in books, and on pieces of paper, disclose our past and present thought. Through these written records we come to know our culture, and, in turn, we form culture through our acts of writing. When Descartes made his connection between thinking and being, he wrote it down -- cogito ergo sum. His doubting and critical questioning about existence changed the nature of Western metaphysics. Though we, as writers and teachers of writing, may not cause the intellectual turmoil of a Descartes, we do take our place in the chain of writing that creates culture, however minor our role may be. More significantly, Descartes' methodology, his critical questioning and examination through writing, can serve as a model in a time when formula writing has stopped the thinking of our students.

My first realization that students were able to write a paper without thinking by using a convenient formula came several years ago. Much as one can learn a language in the early stages by rote memory, some of the students were writing essays designed to meet my requirements by filling in a structure. They were able to set up a thesis, support it with unexamined reasons, and produce an error-free paper. Their papers, however, were vapid and superficial, indicating an unwillingness to explore ideas or to ask critical questions. In effect, these students were absent from writing as a process in which choices are made and questions are formulated.

Since then, my task has been to understand why students remove *themselves* from the writing process which can be, as Elaine Maimon notes, a lonely activity. When they write, students often sit alone at their desks talking to themselves, or if they are aware that writing is an attempt to communicate something to someone, they talk to an implied reader. Does this reader merge with the teacher in their minds, thus making them more cautious about mechanical errors than about content? Or is it that writing seems to be a solitary mode of expression and produces uneasiness about examining beliefs and thoughts? Moreover, how can those of us who teach writing help students overcome their aloneness and their inability to take risks in writing? What are the strategies which will enable students to think critically and to create meaning through the composing process?

These questions remain primary ones, but many others surfaced as meetings on the writing manual began. Ultimately, teachers throughout the country responded to Networks' questions. In the following pages these educators offer answers about the writing process itself and about the attitudes and responsibilities of both faculty and students. They challenge accepted assumptions such as Ken Bruffee does when he insists that writing is a public, not a private act, and they present strategies for inventing questions which can yield insight and, eventually, the power of self-knowledge for today's writing students.

Annette Allen

## THE QUESTIONS:

*Writing Students*

What are the common and special needs of writing students?
What motivates students and what are their responsibilities in learning how to write?
How is student writing to be assessed and measured?
What characterizes acceptable writing?

*Writing Teachers*

Who are writing teachers?
What are the characteristics and responsibilities of good writing teachers?
What are the philosophical issues that a writing teacher should confront?
What methodologies and strategies have proven valuable in teaching writing?
What kinds of materials and what course plans are useful in teaching writing?

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# PART ONE — WRITING STUDENTS

## I. COMMON AND SPECIAL NEEDS OF WRITING STUDENTS

Attentive writing teachers have realized for some time that the needs of students in introductory writing classes are many and varied. In the past dozen or so years, greater access to postsecondary education has diversified these classes further. Writing classes now have a higher proportion of first generation college students, more representatives of Third World countries and a greater percentage of adult students than before. With this increasingly heterogeneous student body, faculty err if they assume that the interests and needs of these students will be identical, or that a registar or a department will have placed these students in discrete, homogeneous units. Nevertheless, there are some common concerns and needs that affect all writing students. Judith Fishman's tutors and students were able to articulate some of these difficulties, while Patricia Silber notes three areas for futher research. Patricia Laurence and Betsy Kaufman discuss more specialized needs of remedial students; Linda Hirsch and Ann Raimes examine in detail the particular needs of ESL writers. Finally, Hirsch and Isabel Byron identify common frustrations for adult writers. Implicit within these later essays is the realization that ESL and adult writers are often grouped and share similar needs with traditional writing students and that well-thought out teaching strategies that apply to one group probably pertain to the others as well.

* * *

Asked recently to express those matters that concern them most when they write, a group of undergraduates remarked:

-The major problem I face is transforming my thoughts into writing on the page.
-The difficulty I have actually comes just before writing.
-The difficulty is really a fear of what I'm going to write. Will it come out the way I want it to? Will it sound good? I really get scared before I write.
-I fear I will be misunderstood.
-When I begin to write, the major difficulty I face is finding a place to start.
-Am I expressing what I truly want to say? That worries me the most.
-Putting my thoughts on paper.
-Getting started.
-Feeling insecure when I stare at the blank page.
-Fear of self-revelation.
-Fear of failure.

At a weekly meeting of a writing lab, these were the comments of the tutors...One tutor put it this way: "It struck me that there are two themes mentioned -one-how to begin, how to approach the issue, how to face the blank page. Two-how to contend with one's self-one's lack of confidence, insecurities, inabilities to manage at all-to write at all."

*Judith Fishman*
*Queens College, CUNY*
*"On Tutors, the Writing Lab, and Writing"*

We find increasingly that a deeper teacher understanding of students is far more important than superficial student understanding of instruction. We are looking, for example, for an answer to why students may well comprehend-or at least be able to explain-the distinction between subordinate and coordinate clauses, but continue to write non-sentences or sentences that convey no meaning.

We seek an understanding on several levels:

> Student attitudes toward instruction. Many students not only consider a writing course a waste of time, but, as our continuing survey of reading/writing habits indicates, have an active antipathy towards the written work, their own or that of others.
>
> Student psychological backgrounds. These include accommodation to a history of academic failure and a resulting passivity, lack of attention, and indifference to completing assignments.
>
> Student misperception of traditional instruction which is not analogous to their primarily oral experience. Students who continually write "fragments" admit that they have been cautioned repeatedly about "run-ons," or, as they understand it, sentences that are too long.

In short, we find that students, even those who, according to their own vision, are trying to do the work of the course, are on such different wave lengths that they are able to profit only in superficial ways from traditional instruction in writing.

*Patricia Silber*
*SUNY-Stonybrook*
*Philosophy and Methods of EGL 100 Program at SUNY - Stonybrook*

Observation of the way that remedial writing students *see, hear, read* and *write* words has led me to appreciate Spenser's warning about the monster Error: *God help the man so wrapped in Error's endless train.* Teachers create the monster by being more preoccupied with recognizing than explaining student errors and, pressed for time, by offering simplistic solutions to complicated linguistic problems. Students, in turn, become obsessively involved with the making, recognizing, and correcting of errors at the cost of linguistic understanding and the full expression of their thoughts and feelings in writing.

Aware of this monster and hopeful of describing an aspect of it, I find myself wondering how writing instructors are to penetrate the linguistic and psychological process which students experience when making certain kinds of errors commonly

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labelled as spelling or proofreading mistakes: confusing similar words, *conversion* for *conversation;* failing to attach proper suffixes, *biology* for *biologist;* confusing voiced and unvoiced consonants, *thing* for *think;* reversing letters, *how* for *who;* leaving out syllables, *marlous* for *marvelous;* confusing minimal sound pairs, *on* for *own;* remembering two words and writing them as one, *undevlored* (a combination of *undeveloped* and *explored*) for *undeveloped;* and inconsistently using inflections like -*s* and -*ed*. Errors like these are the most resistant to improvement in remedial classes.

The origin of these various types of word confusions differs depending on the student's language background, awareness and training, but in writing this exploratory paper I am groping toward an explanation of why certain remedial writing students fail to *see* certain errors in their own writing even after focused attention and seemingly effective grammatical instruction and practice. Why, I ask,don't my carefully-prepared, structured grammar lessons or my lessons in discrimination between confused pairs of words transfer to the writing of my students? What am I overlooking in the language learning process? Am I paying enough attention to the mediating processes which insure transfer? What part do recall and sequencing play in word perception? What is the relationship between word perception and grammatical knowledge and do these processes ever interfere with one another?

How often have we, as writing instructors, repeated monologues like this in conference with students:

> Did you reread your paper? You did? There is an error in this sentence. Can you find it? It is a verb form error. Do you see it now? Look here, this word: what's wrong with it? Focus on the ending. What's missing.
>
> or
>
> Let's compare this sentence which is correctly-written to the sentence next to it. Do you notice any difference between the way the two sentences are written? No? Look at the verbs in both sentences: is there any difference between them? Look at the endings. What did you add to the verb in the correctly-written sentence which is missing from the other?

What are we misunderstanding or minimizing when we ignore a student's revealing silences and charge ahead to refine her perceptual focus as in the above examples, launching into a grammatical explanation, and fulfilling the student's red pencil image of a writing instructor: someone who can be depended upon to perceive and correct errors.

And how do we view the errors we find? The Myopics see errors as flashing lights. They concentrate minute attention with red marks which swell up all over the student's paper at the expense of any thought or feeling ventured. The Romantics are bleary-eyed. They believe that if teachers can motivate students to open the floodgates of self, to liberate the *voice* then all mechanical and careless errors will disappear. The Graces look heavenward. They are horrified that the basic skills of spelling and grammar are woefully lacking in student writing and keep insisting that *Correcting errors is a very small and trivial affair.* And so it seems, judging from numerous faculty discussions, that we are much like the ten blind academics and the students, disputing loud and long *each in his own opinion/Exceeding stiff and strong./Though each was partly in the right,/And all* *were in the wrong.* Perhaps our attitudes toward error are a part of the student's problem.

*Patricia Laurence*
*City College, CUNY*
*"Errors Endless Train:*
*Why Students Don't Perceive Errors"*

Native speakers who have difficulty in writing exhibit different problems. Many cannot sustain writing on a topic for more then a few minutes. They tell us they have "nothing to say," or we later learn they are afraid to make mistakes in grammar, punctuation or spelling so their writing appears inhibited, lacking in complex or compound sentences, limited in the use of words that might exhibit spelling problems. The following composition illustrates what might be termed fear of risk taking or as Mina Shaughnessy suggests they are "inhibited by their fear of error."

> Frank lived with his mother and stepfather. Alison was independent. She left her mother at the age of 16. When they came to New York Alison wanted to stay by herself. She wanted to be on her own. Frank was close to his mother and sister. But Frank lived in a confused world.

This short essay is mechanically free of error. The writing is inhibited and disjointed. The student does not show the relationship between his remarks concerning Alison and Frank. He would be placed in our prefreshman writing course English 01. This course requires prolific writing, the writing of personal narratives, anecdotes, free writing. Although some instructors teach grammar, often it is taught in the context of the student's own writing and not as a separate study.

*Betsy Kaufman*
*Queens College, CUNY*
*Letter to Networks*

Generally, students with word perception problems are in an English-as-a-Second-Language or a remedial class, and can be grouped into three types: 1) those students who have an identifiable interfering schema derived from second language or dialect variation; 2) those who have a generalized or confused recall of words either because of poor early training in the coding of words, inexperience in and difficulty with reading, or a limited word storage related to a poor visual/phonetic memory; 3) those who have a partial interfering schema with attendant word confusions. All three types of students respond to the printed or written word passively, dramatically presenting through multiple errors, silences, and the comment, *I can't see what's wrong* their form of words as the only possible form.

We can explain the first type of student's limited sense of words with Piaget's theory of *assimilation* and *accommodation.* Such a student overlays her *schema* derived from a second language or dialect background, and makes what she sees on the written page conform to an internal idea of what should be there. Perception is inaccurate because the student *assimilates* the external words to her notions rather than *accommodating* herself to what is to be seen. But her notion of words is derived from an identifiable *schema.*

The second type of student has a generalized or confused recall of words which causes him to produce words which generally look or sound like the word in mind. The reasons for this inaccurate recall are various and related to the mysterious way in which words are conceptually, visually and phonetically gathered, stored and processed in the brain.

The third type of student is somewhere in-between the two types just described: he speaks another language or dialect or is surrounded by people who do, and thus he selectively shares some of the language features of an identifiable *schema.* However, the student is not literate in that other language or is only vaguely familiar with its written form and so has many structural and conceptual confusions as a result of not knowing either language very well. This is the case of many of the Chinese-American and Puerto Rican students placed in our remedial classes.

These three types of students are out of touch with words and sentences *as they are,* something easily discovered by having students proofread or read aloud: a student who articulates *-ed* endings may not write them or notice that they are missing when proofreading; a student may sometimes articulate an *-s* which is not present on the printed page when reading; or a student who generally slurs word endings in pronunciating, such as saying *an* for *and,* may also not read and write such words correctly. Perception is inaccurate and the student *assimilates* words to his idea of them; however, with one type of student we have an identifiable system of interference patterns while with the other type of student indentifiable patterns of confusion must be established for the individual. Once the teacher identifies the known and unique schemata of individual students she realizes that changing these schemata is a difficult job, and a major part of the difficulty is related to Piaget's general theory of *centering:* the inability of students to shift perspective so as to perceive configurations, including words, in a new way. The student has only one response or a number of desperate guesses available when reading, writing or proofreading, along with a limited repertoire of grammatical rules and limited language awareness; therefore, he cannot see what is wrong or thoughtfully imagine other possibilities.

*Patricia Laurence*
*City College, CUNY*
*"Errors Endless Train:*
*Why Students Don't Perceive Errors"*

The problems of the bilingual writer frequently center on language interference, word confusions, and translation errors. Word confusions may result from connotation differences, such as "busy," "rush," "fast." They also may also arise from semantic differences such as "problem" and "trouble." Finally, there are words which are phonologically confusing, such as "chance" and "change." A translation error for a Spanish-dominant student might result in the writing of, "I have 20 years old," rather then "I am 20 years old" since the verb "to have" is used to express age in Spanish. Translation errors also mean that many bilingual writers experience difficulties with prepositions, idioms, capitalization, and spelling.

It is very important to remember that while the writing of bilingual writers may often show a number of grammatical errors, a focus on grammar as a means of teaching writing will not be sucessful. We are all too familiar with students who do well in isolated grammar exercises, only to repeat the same error throughout their writing. Therefore, all grammer instruction should be approached through writing, and not divorced from it. Grammar should be a part of writing. Instructors frequently use visuals on which to base writing and grammatical exercises. By answering questions based on the visual, students use certain grammatical structures and make transformations in the context of writing. Whenever possible, the writer should be actively engaged in composing and grammatical problems should be treated through that process.

*Linda Hirsch*
*Hostos Community College, CUNY*
*Letter to Networks*

When we pick up the composition of an ESL student, we do not automatically have to look for and comment on errors. We must always, at any level-even including low-level composition-look at a piece of writing as a message conveying the writers' ideas. We must, by the assignments we create, give students an opportunity to discover their voice. We damage that important reader-writer relationship if we pick out in red all the mistakes we can find, and do not react to what the writer was writing about. We do the writer harm if we are interested solely in the product and not in the process of writing.[1] Our students should have the same opportunities as native speakers to write drafts, to get feedback, and to rewrite. (I have just rewritten this paragraph twice and moved it here from somewhere else.) But—and a very important qualification for ESL composition teachers-even if we *do* pay scrupulous attention to encouraging our students to think originally and logically, to plan, to write, and rewrite, we are still confounded by the additional problems that our ESL students have over and above any native speaker's difficulties.

### *Sentence Structure and Grammar*

The most obvious and pressing problem for most teachers is that of errors in sentence structure and grammar. That is, after all, what teachers-or any readers for that matter-see first. There is a temptation for us all to see missing *-ed* endings, throw up our hands, and press down on our red pens, often without stoping long enough to realize that the student has used the *-ed* ending correctly 75 percent of the time. (This writer acknowledges such transgressions.) When we see what Mina Shaughnessy calls "derailed sentences," our first impulse is to write *idiom, struc.*, or *awk.*[2] A student once asked me about a great many *awk.* comments on a returned paper: she thought it was a cry of pain from the teacher, which it undoubtedly was. If we examine *why* the student is writing awkward sentences, we often see that he or she is grappling with complex ideas and is taking risks in this good cause. The necessity of having to read and "mark" a considerable number of papers in one sitting sometimes makes us unable to see intelligibility through the fog of a few mistakes. Yes, there are six "wrong" words and a missing negative in the following passage from a student's composition-

> The most important quality that I expect in a spouse it understanding. My spouse would have to have a lot of patients with me because I am a very muddy person. Sometimes when I have a date with a girl, and I feel in a bad muddle, I usually take the hostility out on her. If she likes me, she mine it too much. But if she's not so found of me, it will probably be the end of the relationship. I have tried to change my muddy habits, but up to this day I still haven't masterdem.

Underlining or circling in red *patients, muddy, muddle, mine, found,* and *masterdem* might just make the student throw the paper down in disgust (partly with himself). Instead, a comment here on the good use of an example, on the variety of sentence structure and clear use of punctuation, and above all on the lively content will set a frame of reference within which the student will want to correct word errors himself in order to make the point more clearly.

In spite of its many errors, notice how much easier it is to follow the passage above than this one:

> Some TV program are good and other bad for the children. For the children I woul not like that they watching programs there are not of agree with their age because the children should be suggestive or imitate. The parent should indicate the child, what program could to see them.

Here we get totally lost in the confused syntax of the second sentence: the relationships between the parts of the sentence are unclear. How does that *because* clause fit it? We hardly know any more what idea the writer is trying to express. The wrong words used in the first passage give the reader far less trouble-a pause to work out that *muddy* means *moody*, perhaps, but the writer's message is generally unimpeded. This difference between "local" (minor) errors in the first passage and "global" (overall sentence organization) errors in the second passage is a crucial one. Marina Burt and Carol Kiparsky, in their very useful reference book, point out how the correction of the global errors of sentence structure immediately works wonders for the intelligibility of the prose.[3] A few wrong words or missing *-s* endings do not necessarily obscure the ideas. And composition teachers should be looking primarily for ideas, not for mistakes. In the following sentence, the missing *the* is small fry compared to the confusion introduced into the sentence by the intrusive *who*:

> Career prospects should be first thing that a person who looks for in his first job.

It is especially these "derailed" sentences that make ESL students' writing such a difficult problem for teachers. Derailments frequently occur when students attempt to use the academic voice and to make their sentences more complex. They begin a sentence with something other than the subject and get lost in the process:

> Dealing with a subject such as crime it wouldn't have been to tough to do so.

They try a *who* or a *which* clause, which makes the sentence look long enough for it to end:

> A person who majors in history in college and can't get a desent job.

They subordinate in the wrong way, in the wrong place:

> Because she had an accident, she always drove fast.

Why do they do this, we might ask. Why don't they stick to what they (and we) know they can do-the simple subject-verb sentence? But we want our students to take risks to advance beyond Dick and Jane, to try out newly acquired or almost acquired syntactic forms, and if we don't encourage them to do that in our classes, then they might be cautious forever. We have to try to understand why our students write these types of sentences. They might be translating from their first language; they might be trying out what they assume is a legitimate structure of the target language, but are hampered by insufficient knowledge of correct usage; they might be unsure of what they are trying to express (and would therefore flounder in any language); or they might be insecure in the situation in which they find themselves and retreat from it, in defense, into unintelligibility....

Thus, if the student is experiencing difficulties with grasping the concept of sentence structure, the teacher should be certain that he or she knows what is causing the problem before assiging exercises. If the difficulty arises from an inappropriate or unclear assignment, then it is the teacher who needs to do the "remedial" work. If the problem results from the student's native language interference, interference from developmental stages of interlanguage (hypotheses made about the target language based on an incomplete knowledge of that language),[4] expectations about the nature of adademic prose, or interference from nonstandard elements in a spoken dialect (first- or second- generation immigrants who live in a neighborhood where a nonstandard dialect is spoken will pick up and learn this dialect of English), the student's writing will contain grammatical errors, word choice errors, and the syntactic errors of derailed sentences. The teacher, therefore, needs to devise teaching strategies. Some suggestions follow.

### *Strategies*

A variety of avenues of attack are open to the teacher. Talking with the students, asking them what they want to say, and taking dictation as they say it has proved in many cases to help the teacher establish the causes of the lack of intelligibility; the personal discussion about the students' writing also provides the students with a valuable English-speaking audience for the expression of their ideas. *Ideas*, note. Not just rehearsal of pattern practice sentences or paragraphs, but concepts that the students form and want to (or have to) put on paper. In a one-to-one conference, grammatical structures can also be explained more effectively than in a classroom, for here the teacher has the student's undivided attention and can use examples that are of personal interest to the student, or examples from the student's own writing. I once saw a student's eyes light up with the joy of sudden comprehension as she "got" in real light bulb fashion the difference between the *-s* on a plural noun and the *-s* on a third person singular verb. We had,

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incidentally, been "doing" that very point in class for a week or so. Of course, one-to-one conferences take time, a luxury item for many teachers. So assignments take their place, and many of these are extremely helpful. They focus the student's attention on a specific feature, they can be assigned to an individual, a small group, or a whole class, and they can be short and therefore quickly checked. Some examples follow.

1. Sentence-combining exercises based on a particular pattern give practice in lexical and syntactic embedding. For example, to practice embedding of relative clauses, students can be given a series of pairs of sentences such as:

That is the man. He robbed me.[5]

Some ESL textbooks contain such structurally controlled sentence-combining exercises.[6]

2. Combining of short kernel sentences, or de-combining of long convoluted sentences from the students' own writing, gives groups of students or the whole class an opportunity to work out the options available to a writer and to explore new sentence patterns.

3. Controlled compositions let students work on discrete grammatical points by making one change and any resulting changes throughout a passage. For example, students rewrite a passage changing the subject, e.g. *a girl*, from singular to plural. This type of exercise is basically a grammar manipulation exercise, but students are working with connected discourse instead of with the single, isolated sentences of so many grammar exercise textbooks. They can also work on passages of their own writing, using the structure to be practiced, and then rewrite their own composition. For example, they write a paragraph beginning "A girl in my country usually..." and then rewrite it as "Girls in my country usually...."Controlled composition textbooks are available at various levels.[7]

4. Fill-in-the-blank passages offer deleted words-not every seventh word necessarily, as in the original cloze test, but the words the student is having difficulty with: all the pronouns, all the articles, etc. Passages can be chosen from literature, journalism, or again from the student's own papers.

5. Rephrasing sentences gives practice in syntactic or stylistic options. When students are asked to express a stated idea in a different way, they become aware of the choices a writer makes. They also practice sentence patterns. For example, they rephrase "She has ten children and six cats" as "She has not only ten children but six cats as well." Or they can write captions for a cartoon, exploring tone and register as they devise, for example, different ways of expressing "I didn't do it" to various people in varied situations.

6. Expanding sentences with details provides syntactic practice with modifiers and rhetorical practice with illustrative details. Students can begin with a sentence like "The boy kissed the girl" and add details to it to answer such questions as What kind of boy? Where did he kiss her? When? Why? How? What was she wearing?[8]

7. Assigned, but "free," writing tasks let the students write freely whatever ideas they have on a given subject; at the same time, however, the assignments are carefully controlled in that the topic is chosen by the teacher-chosen precisely because it is likely to generate on paper the specific rhetorical form and syntactic structures the students need to practice....

### *Marking a Paper*

As soon as totally free writing is assinged, teachers face the old problem of how to mark a paper with a lot of mistakes in it. There is no one solution, nor should there be. There are as many solutions as there are teachers, teaching styles, learners, and learning styles. Some teachers select from each paper a few grammatical items (articles or *-ed* endings, for example) and correct only those errors. Others might select the same few items but merely indicate where an error occurs-by underlining or by an *X* in the margin-instead of correcting it. Some teachers mark cumulatively; that is, once a grammatical item has been discussed, explained, and practiced in class, errors in it are indicated or corrected. Others merely indicate errors in items that have been practiced, but correct all others. Some teachers work from a numbered checklist of which all students have a copy: if *articles* appears as number 8 on the list, the teacher writes an *8* in the margin of the line containing the error. Others attach a completed checklist to each paper. Donald Knapp has devised a system of using a checklist to reinforce a student's successes. [9] Michael Witbeck uses peer correction procedures, with students working in pairs. [10] Many teachers feel that students are capable of finding errors themselves and write a note like "There are seven errors with articles. Can you find them?"

Various studies on the relative value of end or marginal comments, or of positive or negative comments, tell us little about what most helps students to improve their writing. [11] But if we want our students to keep on writing, to take pleasure in expressing ideas, and to revise and polish, then we should always respond to the ideas expressed and not only to the number of errors in the paper. A system that the students truly understand, that generates questions about writing, and that leads to revision for the sake of the reader is a system that each teacher needs to develop-a simple, consistent system, with positive feedback to the students. Paul Diederich, author of the classic *Measuring Growth in English*, believes that "noticing and praising whatever a student does well improves writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly." [12] This applies to Juan as well as to Johnny.

### *Rhetorical Structure and Organization*

Native speakers of English have to learn how to organize their ideas so that they are as clear as possible for the reader. This is especially difficult for most ESL students. The question of rhetorical structure and how it differs from one culture to another is discussed fully by Robert Kaplan. [13] Certainly many of us have read prose written by speakers of Spanish, Chinese, or Arabic that seems flowery, circular and evasive, or convoluted compared to the linear movement of the English paragraph and essay, in which the topic-support form reflects the subjectpredicate form of the English sentence. Kaplan suggests that students literate in their first language transfer the written structure of that language to English-with very un-English results. Even if some universal concepts of rhetorical structure underlie the cross-cultural differences, these have not yet been articulated clearly enough to be teachable, so ESL students in the meantime need to be familiar with the major modes of written organization in English, modes that will be clear and familiar to a reader.

*Strategies*

1. Kaplan advocates (a) the study and imitation of prose models, following the pattern of paragraph organization; (b) making outlines of professional writing to discover the principles of organization; and (c) putting into order the "scrambled" sentences of a paragraph. These techniques begin-and sometimes end-with writing initiated by someone other than the student in the composition class.
2. Michael Donley proposes the technique of line-by-line dictation of a paragraph, with a pause for discussion after each line of what might lie ahead.[14] This technique can be expanded to include the use of the students' own compositions. After the whole passage has been discussed and dictated, it is examined in detail for the devices that link one idea to another: linking words, relative and demonstrative pronouns, referential pronouns, verb tenses, subordination, and comparatives, for example. This is dealing in a concrete way with what Ross Winterowd calls the "grammar of coherence," a grammar as important for the ESL student writer as the intra-sentence grammar.[15] Students need to know not only how to put words together to make a sentence, but how to put ideas together to make sense.
3. Barry Taylor proposes that even low-level ESL students begin to work on the basic structure of a paragraph and specifically on the ways to establish chronological order. Students interview a partner and write a paragraph about the partner, using a list of questions as a guide. Or they write a paragraph from a chronological list of activities, adding details, frequency words, linking words, and a topic sentence. Taylor's view coincides with my own that ESL composition teaching should begin early because "non-linguistic factors [intellectual and logical factors] are significant in learning to write."[16]
4. My own text, *Focus on Composition,* addresses the issue of organization *after* the students have put some ideas down on paper. The students are encouraged to ask questions about their own and each other's writing: "Why did I put that idea first?" for instance. In this way, prime importance is given to writing draft. Once the ideas are down on paper, the students look at what they have written and begin to see that the organizing of these newly generated ideas should not be arbitrary. Choices open up, and the students begin to feel more in control as they select from the vast number of options available to them as writers.
5. Students can examine passages of writing (professional and their own) to make predictions about organizational links:

   a. They can be given a prose passage with the linking words and phrases deleted. They can read this aloud, making selections for the blanks as they go, or they can work together in groups to select the best alternative.

b. They can be given lists of ideas with the cohesive links removed, to make up into a paragraph.

c. They can be given the "skeleton" sentences of a paragraph (particularly a narrative paragraph), to which they add details, confronting as they do so their options for developing a point and for moving from it to the next one. For example: Add details to develop and illustrate the idea of the first sentence and to lead up to the last sentence: An uncomfortable car is a nightmare on a long trip....When you arrive at your destination, you feel exhausted.

In the same way as good readers rely on prediction, good writers should build into their writing the possibility for the reader to predict what will come next and perhaps even what form it will take. If students read a great deal and analyze what they read for its orgaizational structure, and if they are encouraged to view their own writing as something that will be "reading" for somebody else, they will see a valid reason to work on improving the structural organization of their compositions. In a class where teacher and students read, comment on,and give advice about student-produced writing, the students will be encouraged to work on how they are expressing their ideas and on making them as lucid and as grammatically accurate as possible for a familiar audience....

### *What Students Write about and How They Feel about English: Content and Attitude*

What makes a composition class in ESL different from a grammar class? It *should* be that there is attention paid to the ideas, the flow, the pauses, the juxtapositions, the imagery that make a piece of writing live. How many grammatically accurate but deadly dull compositions have we all read? Probably far too many for our liking and for our view of ourselves as good composition teachers! The composition with flair and originality, one that is reaching out to a reader, is a welcome relief even if it has -*s* endings all in the wrong places. "Here's a writer," we say, and the business of helping put the -*s* in place appears easy.

But we should also ask ourselves how many deadly dull topics we have assigned. Some ESL texts, when they depart from syntax and grammar exercises, ask students to write about their families, school, and events in their past. Texts for native speakers, on the other hand, abound in devices for motivating students to write: photographs, cartoons, controversial readings, mysteries, games, and problem solving. Only a few ESL texts contain tasks of this nature. We know from research on the composing process about the mechanical response to much school-initiated writing, those age-old topics that teachers assign. Yet we still assign them, mark the errors, and give grades.

In the fear of developing negative attitudes toward writing, we do sometimes turn away from these trusty old cross-cultural topics and ask our students (especially those in a class with native speakers) to write about current issues: elections, pollution, marijuana, abortion, or teenage rebellion. We forget that they find reading difficult and that they know very little about the politics and ecology of this country. And, of course, their religious, cultural, and family backgrounds often allow no pros and cons on certain issues. There is no chance of an opposing opinion being considered in the face of a lifetime of firmly entrenched and mandated beliefs. Students turn away from writing if they are asked to discuss culturally alien topics.

*Ann Raimes*
*Hunter College*
*"Problems and Teaching Strategies in ESL*
*Composition (If Johnny Has Problems,*
*What about Juan, Jean, and Ywe-Han?*

The adult writer frequently experiences a higher degree of frustration than the young writer. This often stems from the writer's inability to express complex thoughts in writing. As teachers of writing, we often compound this frustration by viewing a student's writing as either error-laden or error-free. We forget that a piece of writing is an attempt to communicate. This point was emphasized by an incident related by one of our tutors. He had read a student's composition dealing with a highly charged political situation in her native country. After reading her essay, the tutor began to comment extensively on the many grammatical errors he saw in her writing. The student became extremely angry, and aptly expressed her feelings. "Didn't you read what I wrote? Is that all you have to say?" she demanded of the tutor. Needless to say, after that episode the tutor never again forgot to discuss the purpose of a piece of student writing - that is, what is the writer's intent in writing this piece? And as readers, what is our response to that intent? I believe adults are particularly vulnerable to our failure to deal with their purpose in writing. As soon as we forget that each piece of writing is an attempt to communicate, we cease to teach writing.

*Linda Hirsch*
*Hostos Community College, CUNY*
*Letter to Networks*

All colleges have programs which develop writing skills. At the end of an entry *level course, students are expected to be competent in paragraphing, use of transitions, several modes including narrative and descriptive essays, comparative techniques. The goals of Translating Experience into Essay (TEE)* are not different from those in usual freshman composition courses.

Granted that adult's cognitive functions are organizational, integrative and interpretive, instructors must be aware of the implications for the teaching of writing. That adults think at this level is not in question. The situation facing writing instructors is that many adults have never experienced earlier stages in writing, particularly the stage of achievement of competence. The task of the writing instructor is to keep this dichotomy in mind, to teach the competencies in writing while using the thinking skills adults already have.

*TEE* is not remedial in nature. Most remedial programs for adults have failed because they have been structured and experienced by students as peripheral and preparatory to the real process of learning. To be forced to submit to a preliminary program of remedial work only reinforces the adult sense of inadequacy and defers their chance to acquire the kind of confidence which comes with the experience of competence. At New Resources, if students need help with the mechanics of writing, they are counseled into non-credit workshops or given an individual tutor.

The major strategy used at New Resources is encapsulated in the title of the entry level writing course, *Translating Experience into Essay.* Experience is the content of the writing; it validates years in which many adults, particularly women, feel they did, "nothing of great interest."

The following are teaching strategies incorporated in TEE:

* Identifying common fears: by incorporating specific assignments into the syllabus to allay these fears, students see that they have the power to address their own needs and assume responsibility for their own learning.
* Informing students about research that adults' abilities to succeed in learning situations are as great or greater than younger students.
* Beginning with autobiograhical writing: the students have years of experiences to draw from: this allays the fear of "having nothing to write about."
* Beginning with the narrative mode: people love to tell and hear stories. Learning that their own personal stories qualify as "narrative essays" helps make the transition from life to academia, because they see a direct way to include life's experiences in an academic setting.
* Writing and reading pieces aloud: students recognize that they are writing for a specific audience which appreciates their work. This helps to focus a writer's thesis.
* Setting short term goals for the first few sessions. This affords immediate success and is an impetus to continue during the transitional period.
* Writing drafts, not finished products: students in *TEE* write "drafts;" from this process they learn that they will be writers, not failures, when they revise pieces. Since instructors also write the assignments, getting feedback as students do, revising pieces as students revise, problems around authority issues are diffused. This further reinforces the idea that all writers, no matter what their level, edit and revise work.
* Revising pieces through editing groups: it is in the revising that people learn to write. Perhaps the most important strategy employed in *TEE* is the use of editing groups. Students bring in multiple copies of their drafts and work together in small groups to improve their pieces. Early in the semester, the focus is on clarity, logical organization, and structuring of paragraphs; eventually, editing groups work on questions of style, a writer's voice, and powerful prose. These collaborative techniques empower students and reinforce the concept of adults succeeding.
* Bridging life and college: by virtue of students' diverse experiences, a classroom with adult learners cannot be self contained. Recognizing this, a class might go to theaters, movies, lectures, museums, in lieu of a class session. This provides motivation for writing assignments and breaks down the walls between school and life. A second way to bridge experience and academia is to apply writing skills to practical matters. If students can write for school, they can write. An assignment might be a persuasive essay in the form

of a letter to an editor or to the principal of a child's school on an issue about which adults are concerned.

*TEE* has been successful because it deals with adults' attitudes and fears prior to addressing skills issues. By writing from experience, students begin with and build on strengths. By using peer support and group editing of drafts, an atmosphere of collaborative learning is established. By building skills competencies one step at a time, no task is overwhelming; indeed, students have successful experiences which are particularly important during this transition period into academics.

*Isabel Byron*
*College of New Rochelle*
*"The Transitional Experience*
*for Adults Returning to College"*

# II. MOTIVATING STUDENT AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

The line that divides student and faculty responsibility in the classroom is a fine one—the finer the better most of our essayists insist. On the one hand faculty must acknowledge the fears and tentativeness of most beginning writers, but if we indulge these fears we both patronize our students and waste time. It is incumbent upon us to demonstrate that the task of writing, while arduous, is manageable and worthy of the effort that must be expended. Linda Woodson, Beverly Lyon Clark, and Susan Hubbuch discuss some ways to motivate beginning writers and urge—as do other essayists in this volume—that a teacher neglects a primary responsibility if students' anxieties about or indifference to their own writing are not addressed directly and sensitively throughout the writing course. One of the most effective means of overcoming anxieties and motivating students, as Thom Hawkins suggests, is the use of other writing students as tutors outside the classroom. Tutors establish a connective link in the writing process and motivate others by fostering a situation of closeness in which beginning writers can take risks.

* * *

Students should not be made to feel alone. We often label students as bad writers, but the reality of the situation is that most students come to us as non-writers. And since the only difference between a writer and a non-writer is that a writer writes, the most important thing to be done in a writing class is to insure that students write, with writing defined as an action, not going through the motions. One way of insuring writing that I use in the classroom is the in-class journal, ten minutes of writing in class on a topic of my choosing or theirs. I use this procedure to give practice in personas, tones, organizational patterns, and free writing.

I also believe that it is important that a student discover his relationship with an audience, a relationship that Kenneth Burke has described as "an arousing and fulfillment of desires,"[17] more simply commitment and response to that commitment. Finally, I think we too often fail to stress the pleasure that comes in writing, of becoming through our words, and that is something the students can take with them beyond the next few years to the rest of their lives, whether they use writing for a letter to a friend or an article for a scholarly journal.

Last of all, I want to talk about the most important part of motivation, the teacher. I did a survey of my four classes, asking them a variety of questions regarding their own understanding of what motivates them to write, an understanding, remember, that might be quite different from the reality. I was not surprised by the results of the questionnaire. Answers to most items varied. Some felt that reading professional essays motivated them to write; others did not. Some felt that sharing the writing of their classmates motivated them to write; others did not. Most agreed thay liked to be given an aim for their writing, but they wanted to be free to specify the topic. Most suggested there should be a variety of activities in the classroom, although most of their suggested activities were things we had done. Most liked the in-class journal. But, only three out of the seventy-two said that the teacher had nothing to do with their motivation. The word repeated over and over to describe the ideal teacher was "enthusiastic."

When asked what sort of comments motivates them to do better, their replies were that they liked to be told the strengths of their paper. They wanted to be told the weaknesses, too, but they wanted some comments about how they could improve. Most seemed to agree that specific suggestions helped the most. One student wrote that he was discouraged by "very critical comments that *almost* seem to say, 'Man, what a stupid thing to do. You're really dumb.'"

Where do we get the enthusiasm the students described? From the excitement of discovering the reason for writing with each of our students, from knowing that our framework, our paradigm is important enough to demand our energy and that of our students too. We get that enthusiasm from knowing that our definition of rhetoric is worthwhile and may have something in it that the students can take beyond the door of our classroom. Sylvia Ashton Warner says of her work with the Maori infants, "A child's writing is his own affair and is an exercise in integration which makes for better work. The more it means to him the more value it is to him. And it means everything to him. It is part of him as an arranged subject could never be."[18] I am convinced that the writing that our students do is not that different.

*Linda Woodson*
*Texas Tech University*
*"Motivating Students to Write"*

*Self-pacing is a technique I use for working through a textbook, specifically for Van Nostrand's Functional Writing,* but possibly applicable to other texts. Students read chapters and then come in to take a quiz, which includes writing a paragraph or more, using the skills they've been reading about. To pass my course a student must complete seven quizzes in 14 weeks, in scheduled Friday classes. She decides which Friday classes she needs to attend, whether she wants to finish early in the semester, whether she needs to spend a lot of time on a difficult chapter. Students seem to like the flexibility of the system and the independence it gives them—and thus are more motivated to work through the book than they might be if they had to march through it in step with the class as a whole.

*Beverly Lyon Clark*
*Wheaton College*
*Letter to Networks*

Our role in writing classes needs to change. We are used to being the teachers of grammar rules, the teachers of rhetorical formulas, the arbiters of good and bad prose, the editors of papers. We are taking responsibility for our students' discourses. And, in the process, we are giving our students a very distorted, even crippling, concept of writing. Our role needs to be one of readers, not editors; of advisors, not judges; of questioners, not answerers. If we can help an individual find out what he thinks; if, as adults, we can show him how he might enlarge his perspective, then we have accomplished three central goals. We are forcing the writer to possess and take responsibility for her ideas, we are making her directly aware of the needs of a reader, and we are showing her how to think for herself.

Although these goals sound terribly idealistic, they are not untenable. I have taught college-level writing courses in which students are required to give me a piece of prose a week. No topics are given, no length is specified, no specific mode of discourse is required; of the eleven pieces of prose required, only three must be "polished" essays. The only restriction placed on the prose they write is that they must write about something that is real—an experience they have had, an opinion they hold, a conviction they operate on. Once I have received one piece of prose from a student, I begin to make inquiries; I push for more information; I ask questions about what they have said so that they can learn to ask themselves questions. The most frustrating part of teaching this course is the fear and frustration with which the students face these demands. They want me to tell them what to say, they take my suggestions and questions as "rules"; in short, most feel totally lost. Turned loose with their own ideas, they panic. They are afraid to explore their experiences and convictions, to do their own evaluations of their mental constructs of the world. They do not know how to take responsibility, and they really don't want that responsibility. I find this frightening. On the other hand, those who are willing to accept the challenge show an extraordinary improvement in their "writing skills" when they finally realize that the essay they are writing is theirs—when they do explore and record for the class the conclusions they have reached. Of course, they finally experience the satisfaction at least of trying to say what they mean, and meaning what they say. But I have to return to the fear and frustration generated in the students by the course, because this is the response that overwhelms the term. I cannot help but conclude that, in too many cases, the fear and frustration is learned behavior. They fear that I am going to make an immediate judgment of what they have said, they are afraid that they cannot explore their own ideas, they often jump into fiction because they simply cannot face exposing their own ideas on paper, and they are frustrated because I will not tell them how to write their papers. And I am talking about a group of 18-21 year old students who have voluntarily signed up for the class because they are committed to improve their writing.

In our constant quest to find ways to motivate our students to write, we have spent far too little time asking ourselves what role we have played in the fear and frustration students develop about writing. It is one thing to decide "I hate writing because I cannot write (my teacher tells me I'm a terrible writer)" and it is quite another to say, "I have trouble saying what I mean but my ideas are important enough, at least to me, to warrant the struggle I will have to go through to articulate them." The latter attitude is the one we need to foster in our students. But the student will never develop this attitude unless the message he gets from the teacher is "Unless you learn to start where you are and develop your own ideas fully, so they can stand up in the marketplace with the ideas of others, where will you be?" As besmirched as the word has become, we must be supportive—we must give the student the sense that he has a right to his ideas—but in that context we must also be demanding. We do not simply accept what he writes in his papers, we accept it as a base for exploration, investigation, evaluation of those ideas. We must start where each individual student is so that we know how to give the pushes and shoves this individual needs to realize his potentials as a fully thinking person.

*Susan Hubbuch*
*College of Lewis & Clark*
*Letter to Networks*

Tutors often reflect on and assess how their involvement in the student's writing process contributes to the development of writing abilities. They feel that they are providing a vital link in the writing process, a link between writer and audience which is often missing when students write only for teachers. Tutors explain that the missing link is the opportunity to use oral language in discursive intellectual discourse, and that such discourse helps teach students the skills and judgment necessary to revise. It seems to me that tutors are particularly successful at engaging students in this discourse because of the intensely personal characteristics of the social contract between them and their students.

Students want to have power over their environment, to be in control of what happens to them, and they sense that they must learn to manipulate language the way their teachers do before they will be able to play the academic game the way the insiders do. But the system is "impersonal," so where do they start?...

We all know that the combination of formal usage and standard English grammar is one of the hallmarks of the system's official communication code. To open up that code to inexperienced and insecure writers a tutor must use the unofficial closeness of the peer relationship:

> I'm trying to play it by the book while throwing out the book. Laying down the workings of grammar and trying to relax those workings at the same time. I want to stress the accessibility of these language skills, not grant them some kind of elitist status.

This tutor's technique is to break down the distance between persons, a distance students perceive as between language systems. Tutors step in and create a receptive audience, sometimes overcoming years of misguided effort:

> I'm trying to give my students some confidence with formal usage, yet I'm really working to play down the formal, because that seems to be where they've gotten stuck. It's the formality of academic English that hangs them up—when they try to approximate it on paper it comes out stilted.

Student writers try hard to control their language on paper, but they feel the language, like the system, is controlling them.

The tutoring contract is productive because there is a reciprocal relationship between equals, a sharing in the work of the system (i.e., writing papers) between two friends who trust one another. Tutors write at lenght about this special association:

> Intellectually, the student may not respond to tutoring, but I think an

> emotional response is unavoidable. Everyone wants to know someone cares about them. At Berkeley, it is particularly nice and unusual to find that someone is concerned about your academic results....If someone keeps after you enough, maybe, just maybe, a trusting relationship will emerge, and the tutee will not only develop an obligation to his tutor, but an obligation to himself as well.

Tutors are secure enough to insist that students produce their own papers: "I lose all sympathy when the student refuses to think for himself." Tasks are accomplished because there is a mutual effort between friends, a situation of closeness, not distance, that fosters a sense of community in which the language learner *can take risks without fear of penalty*, can let his language become personal, not impersonal. One tutor writes: "I pursue two roles, instructor and friend, although I believe it is essential that I be sympathetic and reassuring so that my student will gain confidence."

Tutors concentrate on the writing task, but unless they put intimacy together with work there is not a real intellectual community. This subtle, sometimes precarious, juggling of a dual role is a pedagogical stance unique to peer tutors. They are, after all, the best equipped for such a role by merit of their student status and their accessibility.

*Thom Hawkins*
*University of California, Berkeley*
*"Intimacy and Audience: The Relationship Between Revision and the Social Dimension of Peer Tutoring"*

# III. MEASURING STUDENT WRITING

As members of the college community and as teachers within a classroom, writing faculty examine evaluation from at least two perspectives. As Anne Herrington and Richard Bailey indicate, universities or colleges have institutional needs: to assess as accurately and efficiently as possible the writing needs of enterng students and to conduct this assessment in such a way that the testing process as Richard Hendrix warns, does not discriminate against any category of students. After the students are placed initially, faculty must assess again and again. Elaine Maimon and Muriel Harris remind us that it is a measure of an instructor's skill if this continual testing of a student's growth as a writer can be linked organically to the writing course and, more importantly, to the student's development as a writer.

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What aspects of student writing can you measure? My initial response is that you can measure most any aspect. What you measure and how you do it will be determined by your purpose.

In general, you can measure how writers write or what they produce. The former is most difficult although for research and instruction purposes is perhaps most valuable. Certainly for a teacher, observation of the process of individual writers yields useful clues about how they plan, organize, and write.

Most assessment comes down to analyzing the product. I won't attempt to review all of the standardized tests on the market. My preference is clearly analysis of actual discourse. I believe an impromptu writing sample can be useful for diagnostic purposes and can be designed to measure growth. In a writing course, growth can most validly be determined by analyzing a portfolio of a writer's work completed during the period of the course.

*Anne Herrington*
*Johnson State College*
*Letter to Networks*

The Michigan faculty have accepted corporate responsibility for the teaching of writing across the curriculum. As a first step toward implementing our new program, we began collecting samples of their writing from the new students enrolled from May 1978 to the present. Elsewhere, my colleague, Michael Clark, has already explained some of the salient points of our evaluation of these samples: our attempt to ensure uniform conditions of testing and evaluation and our lengthy training sessions for the experienced composition teachers employed to evaluate the samples. Our data suggest that the training program was effective: individual bias was reduced by regular sessions in which the papers of each student group were discussed. Further uniformity was gained through the collective formulation of a list of criteria for evaluation, and even though all readings were "holistic," the relative value of mechanical errors or rhetorical organization, for instance, was often weighed to ensure that readers would evaluate papers in the same way. Common judgments were encouraged by a regular re-pairing of the two readers who provided independent judgments of the compositions; when paired readers disagreed, a third reader was invited to serve as a referee.

Readers evaluated each composition on a scale of one (a high score) to five (a low score), but the use of various intermediate grades led to an actual scale of 0.88 (for a "one plus") to 5.15 (for a "five minus"). Computation of scores from the two—or sometimes three—readers was averaged to produce a composite score, and the mean was 2.9429 for the 3,913 papers read between May and September of 1978. These numbers take on a more human scale when we report that there were 8,414 readings during the four month period. In other words, all of the papers were read by two different raters independently and about 15% (or 586) were read a third time to settle any small differences of judgment arising from the first two reading. Nearly all of the readings—7,590—were performed by a faithful cadre of seven readers; the rest were read by five others who attended the training seminar but fewer rating sessions. One person heroically read 1,857 papers! In short, the validity of the experiment hinged on the careful training, re-training, and hard work of a small group of diligent workers....

In order to measure the direction and degree of change in writing ability that took place during the first semester of study at the University, we administered a second assessment to more than 1,400 students during December 1978. While it might have been desirable to have rated all of the papers collected, our readers were unwilling to undertake such an onerous task, particularly when the outcome has value for "research purposes" but little immediate value for students. Therefore, a carefully selected sample of 398 students (just 10% of the total assessment group) was chosen in an effort to evaluate whatever change in writing ability had taken place during the fourteen weeks of the semester. Since we were particularly eager to trace the behavior of the group regarded as the least skillful during the summer reading, that group was somewhat over-represented in the sample, but otherwise all groups in the assessment were proportionately represented. Every effort was made during this evaluation session to ensure that the important conditions observed during the assessment reading were replicated: the initial calibration session was followed by independent judgments of variously paired readers. Papers were presented in a way that made it impossible to recognize their authors, and raters were warned that some papers in the sample were written by students destined for composition or special help but not yet enrolled in courses where it might be obtained.

Now that we have completed the holistic evaluation of assessments and post-tests, we are embarked on an analysis that will correlate writing ability as measured by these instruments with a whole variety of student "characteristics." As might naturally be expected, we have already found that students who do well on the advanced placement composition test and who achieve high scores on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Achievement Test also do well on the University of Michigan assessment, but we are also eager to test the conventional beliefs about the relation of writing skill to course grades, sex, age, field of study, and other similar variables.

In order to develop effective writing programs, we are investigating the linguistic varialbes that correlate with writing skills as measured by our instrument. Our eventual concern is to specify the inventory and deployment of cohesive devices in the writing samples, but we are also eager to compare essays in terms of quantitative variables and measures of syntactic variety and complexity.

While our research is still very much in progress, I beleive that we can draw several preliminary conclusions of general interest. Our approach to testing appears to be effective: students have been able to display their skills and our raters are able to form uniform and reliable impressions. The growth and change in writing ability appears to be directly correlated with the intensity and frequency of writing tasts during the first semester of university study. The writings themselves suggest that students come to Michigan with a good mastery of skills at the sentence level and below, but that they differ significantly in their ability to manage discourse about a subject by exploring its variety in a sustained and "ample" piece of exposition. If these conclusions are confirmed in further research, teachers will want to make curricular changes that will increase our ability to help students learning to write.

*Richard Bailey*
*University of Michigan*
*"Measuring Student Writing Ability"*

Johnson State College faculty chose to develop a proficiency exam because we wanted a uniform method of judging attainment of a specified minimum standard for writing. We felt that a letter grade in a course is often an unsatisfactory indication of writing skills since if often reflects factors extraneous to writing (student's effort and attendance, instructor's individual standards). We also felt it was important to ask students to demonstrate their skills in an impromptu setting where their only aid would be a dictionary, and there would be no possible assistance from roommates, friends, or tutors.

Once the college decided to use an exam, we were still faced with the task of designing it. Here, the support of the FIPSE grant was invaluable.

When we set our to design the exam, we had four primary criteria in mind:

1) The exam should judge the student's ability to create discourse, not the ability to recognize grammatical errors. For this reason, we rejected multiple choice type exams and decided to use a writing sample.

2) The evaluation procedure should yield specific evaluative information. This information would be particularly important for those students who did not pass the exam the first time.

3) Faculty from all academic divisions should be involved in the test design and the evaluation of student essays. We saw this as an opportunity to shift the burden from solely the English faculty to a wider group of faculty. If we recognize that writing is more than grammar and is clarifying and synthesizing your own and others' ideas, then clearly all faculty appropriately share the responsibility for

helping students improve their skills and all should be able to evaluate the success of a writing.

4) The exam should serve a diagnostic as well as an evaluative function. Students should have multiple opportunities to write the exam, should receive specific information about their performance, should have the opportunity to review their exams, and should be counseled into courses as appropriate.

With these criteria in mind, the next difficult step was to clarify what we wanted to test and what standard we would set. We decided to design the exam to assess skills which are necessary for almost any type of writing to a public audience: that is, to explain a point of view clearly and reasonably to a reader; and to write with a minimum of grammatical errors which could confuse or distract an educated reader. We also wanted the exam to assess one conceptual skill which we felt a graduate of a liberal arts college should be able to demonstrate: the ability to write analogically– that is, to develop a point through a sequence of generalizations, not just a narrative or descriptive sequence.

We chose a standard essay format since all students are expected to write in this format for many of their college courses. Other formats (for example, memo or lab report) are too discipline—or career-specific to use for a college-wide exam.

The exam requires the students to demonstrate these skills by writing an essay of approximately 500 words in response to a specific question and editing a passage to correct common grammatical errors. In order to be judged proficient, the exam must pass a two-part grammatical evaluation and a rhetorical evaluation. We separated the two because we wanted a separate evaluation of each and because we felt that grammar would be less reliably evaluated bythe readers and has least to do with the effectiveness of the essay. For sure, grammatical and hand-writing features can bias the rhetorical evaluation, but the readers indicate they feel comfortable trying to ignore these features– particularly since they know they will be judged separately—and focusing instead on what the essay says and how it is developed. Faculty from history and economics can be trained to evaluate an essay on these rhetorical grounds as reliably as literature faculty.

The purpose of the rhetorical evaluation is to judge how successfully the essay responds to the demands of the question. The design of the questions is crucial since we want to assess whether the student can write an analogic essay organized at least at a low-level of generalization.

To insure that the questions will elicit the desired type of discourse, it is necessary to pilot-test the questions in advance. A question which we might dream up thinking it will serve our purposes might be interpreted very differently by those responding to it.

A second kind of problem is posed by questions which are structured so that they lead the students to write to a different purpose. The first job question was meant to lead the writers to organize analogically and thus generalize about their experiences. The pilot-testing showed what perhaps should have been obvious: the first word led the writers to describe, not generalize, except perhaps perfunctorily as a conclusion. The resulting question was more tightly structured and elicited essays organized around generalizations to explain the cause-effect relationship.

Contrary to research which says only one question should be used, we give the student four choices. I agree that given the variability of topics, no choice should be given to insure a truly uniform situation. But, the faculty and students felt choice was absolutely necessary. So, we offer a choice. One counterbalance to students choosing a question that might be more difficult that another and doing poorly is that they have multiple opportunities to take the exam. The topics are also available ahead of time.

The explanation of the questions specifies the topic, the purpose—which is explanatory—and the attitude of the audience, although not a specific audience. All questions this spring required the writer to explain a change and how it was caused by something. They could be in any mode requiring generalizations as the organizing principle.

Each question is open enough to allow some room for the students to define it in terms of their own experiences, but specific enough to define the task fairly concretely no matter what experiences are discussed.

The questions also ask the writers to reflect, not speculate. We have found that questions which require speculation outside the writer's own experience tend to elicit very general responses. The essays are more convincing and focused when the writers can write about a question to which they can bring their own experiences and knowledge.

Each exam essay is evaluated independently by two readers; a third reader is used only when the first two differ by more than one rating. A rhetorical trait scoring guide is used. In contrast to some evaluation procedures which assume that the traits of good writing are the same, no matter what the purpose, a rhetorical trait procedure assumes that the characteristics will change as the purpose and audience change. That is, the characteristics of a persuasive paper are much different from those of an explanatory paper.

The complete scoring guide for the readers includes the essay task, the rhetorical criteria, and range-finders, that is, essays which illustrate the ratings of 2, 4, 6, and 8. During the training period, I explain the criteria and use the range-finders to illustrate them. The readers then read, rate, and discuss additional training essays.

The traits for question 1 describe characteristics of essays at each rating according to three primary components: viewpoint, elaboration, and pattern. The three, taken together, reflect whether the student was successful in establishing a position and explaining it clearly and reasonably to the readers. On this guide, clarity of expression is included only as a negative characteristic for a 4 rating. Some reference to it should have been made across the entire scale.

Although the reader is asked to make a holistic judgment, this procedure is different from the total impression holistic evaluation procedure developed by ETS since the ETS procedure asks the reader to respond to the writing in terms of all aspects of writing and there is no attempt to focus on the specific characteristics of a specific task.

We want to see not whether the students can write anything according to very general or subjective criteria, but whether they can write to a specific purpose, judged by specific, descriptive criteria. We also want the reader's attention focused on a total rhetorical impression of the essay, not on their anatomized response to separate components.

We feel that the exam is beneficial to the college. Most importantly, the requirement underscores the importance which the entire college places on writing. Students know that in order to graduate from the college they must be able to demonstrate specific writing skills which the college has said that it values—these skills reflect not merely the superficial qualities of writing, but also more substantial conceptual ones.

*Anne Herrington*
*Johnson State College*
*"Judgement: Designing a Proficiency Exam"*

Holistic scoring is popular with English teachers because, as the name implies, it is based on overall impressions which involve common values and norms. This makes the method consistent with academic practice, and in fact some faculties are trying out collective grading activities derived from ETS's. Probably this is a worthwhile control against the arbitrariness of individual professors. And the fact that consensus is usually achieved can be taken as a validation of typical faculty judgment, although that judgment still needs explication.

The most important effect of this kind of judgment, however, is that it establishes (and continues) the norms of one fairly homogeneous group as a standard. Of course all norms belong to individuals, though some may be more universal than others. In the case of writing assessment, the norms of standard written English are very nearly the norms of white,middle class faculty. This at least is a fair description of those who make the judgments, and when the content of an essay is part of what is judged, the experience of writer and reader are at issue.

As always, we need to understand what these norms and expectations exclude. On the one hand, the relatively direct forms of written communication required in business or civic affairs are not often part of the experience of English teachers. They are likely to downgrade writing which might be very effective in non-school contexts.

Most serious is the likelihood that the typical judgments of writing teachers will penalize working class and minority students. Almost everyone expects (though few point it out) that these students will do worse with increased testing. Cultural unfairness may arise even apart from questions of content. Speakers of non-standard English (blacks and others) may be on their way to developing quite effective writing abilities, even while some of the surface features of their writing (e.g., noun/verb agreement) are persistently incorrect.

Until we can be sure that teachers have real insight into language, and into the emotional difficulty of cultural assimilation, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that minority and working class students have to go an extra mile in mastering writing. That fact is likely to be continuously dramatized with renewed testing. The extra effort itself may be justifiable in practical and social terms (many black parents now insist on it), but writing teachers at least need to acknowledge this situation, and rethink the relative weight given to different aspects of writing for the developing writer. Writing is hard enough to master in its own right, without becoming the arena for unacknowledged social differences.

The testing function brings us back to the prospect that the movement to improve writing may finally (and ironically) penalize those with the greatest need.

This is possible because of the social role of those most concerned with writing improvement.

*Richard Hendrix*
*The Fund for the Improvement of*
*Postsecondary Education*
*"The Status and Politics of Writing Instruction"*

But not every act of writing should be evaluated. In fact, most often the instructor's role is that of a sympathetic reader who helps the student work toward a finished product ready for a stranger's eyes. Composition teachers can do their most effective teaching as they coach their students through successive drafts and revisions. One way to help students deal with the problems of cognitive overload is to show them that they can concentrate on different demands on successive drafts, rather than all at once....

In practical classroom terms, we need to grade fewer papers, while we encourage students to do more writing. If we require students to write every week, either on revisions or on new projects, and then require only one finished paper per month, we are not lowering standards but raising them. As professional academics, we are able to choose when articles are ready to be sent out for evaluation by journal editors, and we then take the consequences of those evaluations. If we want students to learn how writers behave when they write for strangers, we must give students at least limited practice in deciding when a project is finished and ready for strangers' eyes. When students understand that their composition teachers can be helpful friends while a paper is in process, students may also learn to withhold closure on a project until it is worthy of a grade. Students may even welcome an objective assessment when they believe that a paper is ready for strangers, and students may finally understand why their instructors must role-play the strangers' part when assigning a grade. Students may thereby learn that a piece of writing may not be poor but only unfinished, and there beckons a universe of infinite hope and motivation.

*Elaine Maimon*
*Beaver College*
*"Talking to Strangers"*

It is becoming increasingly clear that evaluation of student writing offered as a final report on a finished product is only minimally useful as a tool for learning. We, or course, find student writers who can abstract and apply to their next writing what they have learned from the list of errors, deficiencies, and successes noted on their finished papers, but for too many basic writers there is little retention and even less interest in the contents of such post mortems. Even when we evaluate students' papers and ask for revisions, we are entering into the act too late if the first comments a student receives are directed toward a draft which is already, to some degree, suffering the onslaught of rigor mortis.

What we need, then, for truly useful evaluation is a continuing process of offering feedback to student writers as they move from the initial grappling with the chaos of the unrefined subject to a well articulated written product. Moreover, we need to provide students with different sources, methods, and purposes for evaluation so that each stage of evaluation changes to fit the students' need as they develop each piece of writing and as their general writing skills improve. Evaluation which accompanies the student through the process of writing a paper can move from initial encouragement and questioning as the student refines his subject, purpose, and audience to later suggestions for revision as he confronts specific problems. In addition, the student's evaluation skills should develop as the semester progresses so that his initial responses give way to more mature judgments. Finally, the instructor needs a format or strategy for evaluating the writing skills the student has acquired by the end of the course. The program of evaluation offered here aims at achieving these goals.

Before launching into the considerations of such a program, we need first to appreciate why the acquisition of evaluation skills is so important for the student who is not a skilled writer. On-going critiquing is a necessary exercise for him because he has not yet adequately developed his own skills as the primary critic of his writing. Thus, the job of the teacher in the writing classroom is to help students learn not only how to write but also how to evaluate that writing in order to revise it in the next draft. To move students beyond that passive waiting to see "what's wrong," what The Teacher wants corrected, we cannot be the sole graders during a semester or two of composition courses and then suddenly turn the student loose to become a self-regulating editor who can effectively spot the need to reorganize, revise, and correct. What we need to do, finally, is to wean the student so that he or she becomes not only an independent writer but an independent critic as well....

Evaluation begins where any writer begins, with the pre-writing stage which, as Donald Murray so succinctly describes it, "is everything that takes place before the first draft. Prewriting usually takes about 85% of the writer's time. It includes the awareness of his world from which his subject is born. In prewriting, the writer focuses on that subject, spots an audience, chooses a form which may carry his subject to his audience."[19] Well said, but how can the inexperienced basic writing student who has either been ignored or forced to write for a lone "Teacher-Grader" spot his audience if he has not yet developed a clear sense of the distinctions between different audiences, their interests, and their varying needs for information (as opposed to that all-knowing teacher for whom he may have been writing)? Feedback on these matters from a real audience is the first need of the inexperienced writer, and it can be offered easily in small groups who come together to react to each other's suggestions or proposals for a paper....

I have found that students who meet in small groups in the classroom to send up their trial balloons do several useful things in the act of talking out or reading their first suggestions.[20] They often embellish on or continue to create content as they talk, adding to or rejecting what they are offering not only because the mental juices are beginning to flow but also because of their changing perceptions of the audience's reactions. Verbal or non-verbal reinforcement from another student who really begins to listen suggests that they may have some very real reader interest; a question from another student makes the writer aware of the need for more information or the need to develop another aspect of the topic. In one way or another, if the members of the group are actively engaged in helping each other to begin their papers, the writer will start to gather useful information about who his audience is. The instructor's role in this stage of evaluation is really that of a facilitator. He establishes a comfortable level of openness in the classroom, brings the groups together, and offers only minimal structure for the groups' task, perhaps no more than a rehearsal of some open-ended suggestions or a vocabulary for useful responses....

The writer may find his own stance, but the interaction with the audience is what helps the basic writer learn how to sharpen or define it, particularly when he has not yet developed a sense of writing as public communication. When a basic writer is writing not for self-discovery alone, but for that public beyond himself, he can learn how to evaluate his initial judgments, to base the writing not on his intention of what an audience might want, but on their real reactions. The more the writer is exposed to this kind of feedback, the better able he is to begin building some generalizations about future audiences he will write for....

After the writer has had some pre-writing feedback and has had some time to turn his suggestions into a first draft, he is ready for a different kind of evaluation, a more structured critiquing by a group in which the writer may or may not be present (though I find that both situations should be tried). Again, the evaluation is offered primarily from the writer's peers, though the instructor can be a more active participant in offering models for evaluation by means of evaluation forms. The questions to be answered on these forms are a way of giving direction to the group's task, but more important, they are an aid to basic writing students who usually do not, at first, have a clear idea of what they should be looking for in trying to judge whether a piece of writing is good. I have found that evaluation sheets for the group to fill out early in the semester are best kept very general, seeking mainly for some of the more easily arrived at holistic responses, e.g.:

> Did the panel of readers enjoy reading this paper?
> If so, what contributed most to the enjoyment-interesting topic vivid details, etc.?
> If not, what could make the paper more effective-more description, clearer focus on the subject, etc.?
> Which is the best part of this paper? Why?
> What should be left out, changed, or expanded?

These kinds of questions are encouragingly easy to respond to as the writer-reader starts to flex his critic's muscle; similarly, these types of questions are fairly easy to internalize as guides for the writer's next writing. Another very useful question on an evaluation sheet used early in the semester is one that asks the panel of readers to state what they think the main point or thesis of the paper is, thus seeking out the degree of overlap between the writer's intention and the reader's perception.

As the semester progresses, the evaluation sheet questions for this second or rough draft stage (after the initial pre-writing feedback) become more precise as new concerns of writing that are being discussed in class are added in. Matters such as effective use of introductions and conclusions, paragraphing, etc. are included. To help "test the effectiveness of a student's piece of writing as a whole," Richard Larson offers four questions to ask which, though intended for use by teachers, can and should become students' criteria as well:

1. Does the writer perform felicitously the act he promised?
2. Are the conclusions, the judgments, consistent with and supported by the data and arguments that precede them?
3. Is it possible for the reader to see, from the beginning to end, in what direction the piece is moving, what steps are taken to reach the writer's goal, and why?
4. Who is talking to us? Are we in the presence of a faceless speaker or a distinctive identity? Is that identity consistent within the paper, and is it suitable to the writer's goal in coming before us? [21]

On the students' evaluation forms we may not be able to ask all of Larson's questions as fully as they are presented here, but we ought to be moving the class toward an understanding of these criteria.

We ought also to listen to the students' sense of what they consider to be important standards by which to judge their writing. If the evaluation sheets have been working effectively, the questions originally suggested or structured primarily by the teacher should give way, later in the semester, to the class's suggestions.

Before I proceed, I ought to include another rationale for these evaluation sheets because for some they surely seem like that bureaucratic approach to life that we prefer to avoid. In a writing class, filling out these forms is an excellent opportunity to practice conciseness, clarity, and accuracy in writing, for the act of answering the questions on the evaluation form (when the writer is not present) requires that the critic select from the flow of the group's conversation the relevant words that need to be recorded. It quickly becomes apparent that unclear or partially explained evaluations are less than useful to the writer as he later consults his sheet for suggestions as he proceeds to the next stage of revision. In addition, as I move around the classroom during evaluation sessions, I find also that students in their roles as critics sometimes need help in articulating vague impressions....

In sum, the teacher's role during the stage of panel evaluation is first, to structure the evaluation procedure so that students can practice and refine their critical skills; and second, to be available for help in recording the kind of evaluation that will also be useful to the writer. After the group has done its work and the writer has had a chance to browse through the comments, I usually ask for equal time as yet one more reader of the rough draft, and I react in writing both to the group's comments and to the writer's writing. What is returned to the panel of readers and then to the writer is a set of multiple voices talking to each other– in writing.

Since I am convinced of the validity of the workshop approach to the composition classroom, the revision that follows after the evaluation forms are returned to the writer goes on for several days in class. It is here (or in conferences) that the instructor becomes most directly involved in helping each individual student. Solutions for weak spots are discussed, alternative organizational patterns can be considered, or rules of grammar that are needed can be explained. Intensive work in grammar is best left for this stage because errors in earlier drafts may disappear from the page as sentences are discarded or rewritten. Techniques for proofreading can also be offered at this time, if that is what is needed. In this stage of revision, then, the student has a more well-defined sense of what writing problem (or problems) he is trying to solve, and the instructor becomes a consultant who can from his experience offer a wider range of suggested solutions than the student may yet have at his fingertips. The effect of this is to reverse the usual grading procedure because help is offered as a solution to a need, not as an *ex post facto* umpire's call.

When the paper which results from this second stage of revision is handed in for a grade, the teacher's evaluation is both easy and quick. Rather than being confronted with an unknown, new product, the teacher is working with familiar content in which successful revisions and remaining difficulties are easier to spot. We can and should grade these revised papers thorughout the semester, to help students evaluate their work, but even these grades can be stages along the way to a final evaluation in a course where students are in the process of acquiring a skill. I have never been comfortable with the concept of assigning a course grade based on an average of those grades given during the semester because no matter what the student's entering skills were, his or her goal is to be a competent writer by semester's end. We can weigh the last few papers more heavily, but this puts undue stress on the writing performance evident in a small sample. One partial solution which, however, does not alleviate the problem of grading a small writing sample, is to allow students to spend the last week or so of the course revising several papers of their choice to submit as a final sample for consideration. By the end of the semester the student who has achieved some skill as a critical reader can go back over old papers to see problems or better solutions that weren't apparent to him earlier. As the end of the semester, when the student submits what he now considers to be his best effort, he is demonstrating the skills he has acquired by the end of the course.

I strongly believe, and am convinced by watching students' progress, that when evaluation is stressed as an on-going tool for revision, the student comes to the realization that not only is writing a process, but evaluation is too. The teacher's role as Super Critic dissolves as he becomes instead what the instructor of composition truly is, a tutor helping students as they learn how to write well. Extensive practice in evaluation helps the student to sharpen his skills as a critic of other writing, guides him as he revises, and demonstrates to him that, finally, *evaluating his writing is his job*. Moreover, evaluation must be done through each stage, from pre-writing to final draft. This may sound as if the student is being pushed into an endless cycle of seeking perfection; but, fortunately, human nature is such that we usually give up at some point, vowing that the next paper will be better.

*Muriel Harris*
*Purdue University*
*"Evaluation: The Process for Revision"*

# IV ACCEPTABLE WRITING

Perhaps as imposing a task as any confronting the writing teacher is the obligation to define what is satisfactory or acceptable. We can approach acceptability in a matter-of-fact technical way, as does Janice Hays, or analyze the specific requirements of various disciplines as does Anne Gere, or with Linda Flower distinguish between Reader-Based and Writer-Based prose, or assess the "human validity" of the writing with Richard Hendrix.

* * *

At the college level, students must be able to write analytically about a subject-matter, establishing an argument, developing it with some degree of complexity and sophistication, and supporting it with relevant evidence, examples, details, or whatever is appropriate to the discipline. The writing should be coherent and intelligible, and free enough of errors so that the reader's understanding is not impeded by surface difficulties.

*Janice Hays*
*Skidmore College*
*Letter to Networks*

Comparison and contrast, relation of a specific case to a more general rule, explanation of a concept and careful analysis of a statement or passage are among the most frequent types of questions used on an essay exam. To succeed on an essay exam students must assess the question, organize (mentally or in brief notes) their information and begin writing almost immediately. Research papers involve many of the same strategies. Students may take more time with their writing, but they are required to assess the field of inquiry, organize material and demonstrate, through writing, their mastery of the question. In both essay exams and research papers,writing serves as a means for students to show, and teachers to evaluate, what has been learned. The lab write-up, often required in science courses, likewise emphasizes demonstration of what has been learned. Lab write-ups, which describe laboratory experiments, conform to a format of 1) introduction to,or summary of, the experiment, 2) methods and materials, 3) experimental results, 4) discussion of results and 5) conclusion. Students report that virtually no attention is given to usage or other aspects of language, content or correct results are the essence of a lab write-up. Abstracts or project descriptions have much in common with lab reports because language justifies or explains a technical procedure. Engineering students, for example, write project descriptions to show the reasons underlying a design project and to compare their project with others. Letters, as defined in Business Administration, follow a set formula much as the lab report does.Letters and other pieces of commuinication must conform to prescribed conventions, and these conventions—not rhetorical strategies—are emphasized. Students explain that they simply fit information into established forms for Business Communication.

Critical papers, written in Art History, Comparative Literature, and English classes have a more subtle form, fewer fixed conventions and allow students some freedom of expression. A critical paper in Art History, for example, examines a piece of art using analytical strategies which have been demonstrated in class. The student is encouraged to concentrate on the work itself, describe it fully, solve a problem which it raises or compare it to another work using the same theme; use of biography, history or encyclopedic information is usually prohibited because these interfere with close examination of the work itself. Although the form is not precisely defined, critical papers for Art History—or English or Comparative Literature—are governed by a number of conventions. Frequently the number of pages is specified by the instructor, and this length imposes certain constraints on the writer. Close examination of art or literature involves awareness of patterns or motifs, knowledge of conventions of the form, ability to explain meanings and control over detail. Although the specifics are not always articulated by instructors, critical papers focus on certain kinds of information. It would be inappropriate, for example, to count the number of brush strokes or words, to discuss the weight of a book or sculpture or to report on technological aspects of binding or paint production. Students often have some rhetorical choices in critical papers; they may present an argument, draw comparisons, enumerate qualities or adopt a variety of other rhetorical strategies. However, critical papers follow a general format of presentation or introduction,development or explanation and conclusion; they usually assume a detached view of the object under consideration and they conform to styles of interpretation valued within the discipline. As is true with lab write-ups or essay exams, the pedagogical purpose of the critical paper is to demonstrate learning to the instructor; evaluators are the audience for critical papers. Students report varying amounts of attention given to language in critical papers but nearly all contend that ideas are more important than means of expression.

Journals written by students in Women Studies or English classes, relate experiences and sometimes provide raw material for more formalized writing. Women Studies courses, for example, often require journal accounts of experiences with sexism, discrimination or legal status of women. These accounts narrate an experience, offer the author's interpretation of events, and discuss implications of the occurrence. Students write to explore their own actions and perceptions rather than to be evaluated. Journals may be read and commented upon by an instructor, but journals are rarely assigned a grade. An instructor may suggest, or a student may choose, to draw upon journal writing for a research project or critical paper, but the journal itself is written for a responding, not evaluating audience.

Quantity of student writing in college is relatively easy to define, but the differences between essay exams and journal writing make the qualitative question more difficult to answer. In essay exams, research papers, lab write-ups, descriptive papers and critical papers, writing serves as a means of evaluation, it provides students with a forum for displaying their learning and teachers with a product to judge. These forms emphasize prescribed forms for presenting information; a kind of linguistic package deal controls much college writing. Journal writing is somewhat atypical in neither serving as a means of evaluation nor adhering to a stipulated form. Although kinds of college writing vary widely, the relative quantities of types reveal a more consistent pattern. Journal writing appears rarely in college classes whereas essay exams and research papers are nearly universal forms of college writing....

With the exception of journals and some critical papers, the writing described in this sample can be characterized by Emig's extensive mode.[22] As Emig describes it, the extensive mode is active, occurs chiefly as prose, addresses itself to teacher audience, is often detached and reportorial and involves a relatively short prewriting period. Emig contrasts extensive writing with that in the reflexive mode wherein writers are more contemplative and committed, reformulate frequently, take longer with prewriting and address themselves to a sympathetic audience. Emig laments school emphasis on the extensive mode because it is so far removed from the practices of the best contemporary writers and because it truncates the process of writing into a few mechanical steps. Emig's work suggests that high school emphasis upon research papers and other writing in the extensive mode will prevent—or make unlikely— students becoming genuinely engaged in writing.

This point is underlined by the recent work of British educators whose work is summarized in *The Development of Writing Ability* (1-18).[23] After rejecting traditional rhetorical categories of argument, exposition, narration and description because they fail to account for the writing process or the effect on the writer of what he or she writes, Britton and his colleagues establish categories of transactional and poetic writing. Transactional corresponds roughly with Emig's extensive mode; poetic refers to imaginative literature or verbal object; and they both emphasize the process (rather than the product) of writing. However, Britton's group sees expressive writing as an intermediate form between transactional and poetic and —more important for this discussion— sees expressive writing as the source of other modes. Expressive writing, as Britton's group defines it, voices the writer's immediate preoccupations and mood, is relaxed and assumes an intimate relationship with the audience, inviting the audience to enter the writer's personal world. Expressive writing draws upon the linguistic resources of daily speech and "in developmental terms, the expressive is a kind of matrix from which differentiated forms of mature writing are developed." Of writing described in the University of Washington sample, only journal writing fits into the expressive category. If students do not learn to write expressively, claims Britton's group, they will not be able to use their full linguistic resources in any of their writing.

In their analysis of 2,122 pieces of school writing, Britton's group found that degree of involvement distinguished good writing; writers make the task their own and seem able to bring the full force of their knowledge, attitudes and language experience to bear on the writing. Perfunctory writing, in contrast, seems written to satisfy the minimum demands of the task and evinces no interest in language for its own sake. Writing to fulfill an assignment need not produce perfunctory prose. Britton's group demonstrates that students often exhibit considerable involvement in assigned writing. Students' ability to become involved in writing tasks seems to derive from their experience with the expressive mode.

Emig and Britton together make a convincing case for the need for continuing attention to reflexive and expressive writing. They show that writing at all stages of development profits from author involvement; expressive writing shouldn't disappear as students become more adept with abstractions. In light of these studies it is lamentable that college writing is dominated by impersonal forms which allow little author involvement and virtually prohibit the expressive mode. Too, it is not surprising that professors' most common lament on my campus, and on others across the country, concerns the quality of student writing. Committees are formed, diagnostic exams constructed and required courses developed, but until college writing elicits response as well as assessment, the laments will doubtless continue.

High schools, then, bear the major burden of developing expressive writing. Students who go on to college will have little opportuity to write in the expressive mode until college instructors become more informed about the essence of composition. Yet it is expressive writing (rather than writing to show, to demonstrate competence) which will enable students to draw upon the full power of their language. Students who do not go on to college will likewise benefit more from learning to use the resources of their native tongue than from fitting information into narrowly conceived categories. High school assignment of research topics, essay exams and other forms emulating dominant college writing patterns will—like my friend the electrician—solve technical problems and create human ones. Students will know how to manipulate language in limited ways, how to satisfy certain formal requirements, how to use words to demonstrate learning; but they will fail to comprehend the value of language for its own sake, the delight of showing and exploring ideas and experiences and the effect writing can have on their own lives. High school students presented with a limited range of writing assignments will fail to achieve the self-actualization which Rohman describes as one of the goals of writing instruction. In dicussing reasons for teaching writing Rohman asserts: "If it is to 'program' students to produce 'Letters and Reports for All Occasions,' it is not only ignoble but impossible.... However, if it is to enlighten them concerning the powers of creative discovery within them, then it is both a liberal discipline and possible writing program."[24] To help students unleash their powers of creative discovery as well as to write well-formed sentences, we must develop and maintain an expanded view of composition. We cannot settle for *writing*, a monolithic structure designed to achieve high grades in certain college classes; we need WRITING, a multidimensional form which engages students and enables them to discover something of themselves *and* to produce stunning essay exams.

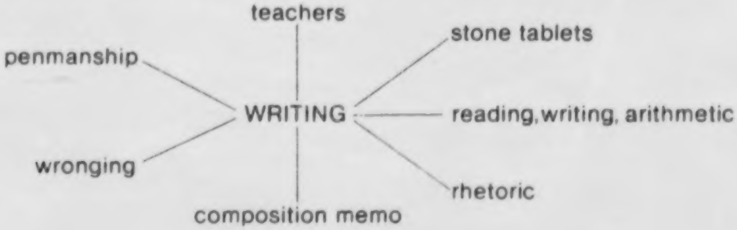
Anne Gere
Uiversity of Washington
"writing and WRITING"

In the best of all possible worlds, good writers strive for Reader-Based prose from the very beginning: they retrieve and organize information within the framework of a reader/writer contract. Their top goal or initial question is not, "What do I know about physics, and in particularly the physics of wind resistance?" but, "What does a model plane builder need to know?" Many times a writer can do this. For a physics teacher this particular writing problem would be a trivial one. However, for a person ten years out of Physics 101, simply retrieving any relevant information would be a full-time processing job. The reader would simply have to wait. For the inexperienced writer, trying to put complex thought into written language may also be task enough. In that case, the reader is an extra constraint that must wait its turn. A Reader-Based strategy which includes the reader in the entire thinking process is clearly the best way to write, but it is not always possible. When it is very difficult or impossible to write for a reader from the beginning, writing and then transforming Writer-Based prose is a practical alternative which breaks this complex process down into manageable parts. When transforming is a practiced skill, it enters naturally into the pulse of the composing process as a writer's constant, steady effort to test and adapt his or her thought to a reader's needs. Transforming Writer-Based prose is, then, not only a necessary procedure for all writers at times, but a useful place to start teaching intellectually significant writing skills....

Seen in the context of memory retrieval Writer-Based thinking appears to be a tapline to the rich sources of episodic memory. In the context of the composing process, Writer-Based prose is a way to deal with the overload that writing often imposes on short term memory. By teaching writers to use this transformation process, we can foster the peculiar strengths of writer-based thought and still alert writers to the next transformation that many simply fail to attempt.

One way to account for why Writer-Based prose seems to "come naturally" to most of us from time to time is to recognize its ties to our episodic as opposed to semantic memory. As Tulving describes it, "episodic memory is a more or less faithful record of a person's experience." A statement drawn from episodic memory "refers to a personal experience that is remembered in its temporal-spatial relation to other such experiences. The remembered episodes are...autobiographical events,describable in terms of their perceptible dimensions or attributes."[25]

Semantic memory, by contrast, "is the memory necessary for the use of language. It is a mental thesaurus, organized knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meaning and referents, about relations among them, and about rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulation of these symbols, concepts, and relations." Although we know that table salt is NaCl and that motivation is a mental state, we probably do not remember learning the fact or the first time we thought of that concept. In semantic memory facts and concepts stand as the nexus for other words and symbols, but shorn of their temporal and autobiographical roots. If we explored the notion of "writing" in the semantic memory of someone we might produce a network such as this:



In an effort to retrieve what she or he knew about stone tablets, for example, this same person might turn to episodic memory: "I once heard a lecture on the Rosetta stone, over in Maynard Hall. The woman, as I recall, said that ...and I remember wondering if...."

Writer's obviously use both kinds of memory. The problem only arises when they confuse a fertile source of ideas in episodic memory with a final product. In fact, a study by Russo and Wisher argues that we sometimes store our ideas or images (the symbols of thought) with the mental operations we performed to produce these symbols.[26] Furthermore, it is easier to recall the symbols (that fleeting idea, perhaps) when we bring back the original operation. In other words, our own thinking acts can serve as memory cues, and the easiest way to recover some item from memory may be to *reprocess* it, to reconstruct the original thought process in which it appeared. Much Writer-Based prose appears to be doing just this—reprocessing an earlier thinking experience as a way to recover what one knows.

The short-term memory is the active central processor of the mind, that is, it is the sum of all the information we can hold in conscious attention at one time. We notice its capacity most acutely when we try to learn a new task, such as driving a car or playing bridge. Its limited capacity means that when faced with a complex problem—such as writing a college paper—we can hold and compare only a few alternative relationships in mind at once.

Trying to evaluate, elaborate, and relate all that we know on a given topic can easily overload the capacity of our working memory. Trying to compose even a single sentence can have the same effect, as we try to juggle grammatical and syntactic alternatives plus all the possibilities of tone, nuance, and rhythm even a simple sentence offers. Composing, then, is a cognitive activity that constantly threatens to overload short-term memory. For two reasons Writer-Based prose is a highly effective strategy for dealing with this problem.

1. Because the characteristic structure for Writer-Based prose is often a list (either of mental events or the features of the topic), it temporarily suspends the additional problem of forming complex concepts. If that task is suspended indefinitely, the result will fail to be good analytical writing or serious thought, but as a first stage in the process the list-structure has real value. It allows the writer freedom to generate a breadth of information and a variety of alternative relationships before locking himself or herself into a premature formulation. Furthermore, by allowing the writer to temporarily separate the two complex but somewhat different tasks of generating information and forming networks, each task may be performed more consciously and effectively.

2. Taking the perspective of another mind is also a demanding cognitive operation. It means holding not only your own knowledge network but someone else's in conscious attention and comparing them. Young children simply can't do it.[27] Adults choose not to do it when their central processing is already overloaded with the effort to generate and structure their own ideas. Writer-Based prose simply eliminates this constraint by temporarily dropping the reader out of the writer's deliberations.[28]

My own research suggests that good writers take advantage of these strategies in their composing process. They use scenarios, generate lists, and ignore the reader, but only for a while. Their composing process, unlike that of less effective writers, is marked by constant re-examination of their growing product and an attempt to refine, elaborate, or test its relationships, plus an attempt to anticipate the response of a reader. Everyone uses the strategies of Writer-Based prose: good writers go a step further to transform the writing these strategies produce.

But what about the writers who fail to make this transformation or (like all of us) fail to do it adequately in places? This is the problem faced by all teachers who assign papers. I think this study has two main and quite happy implications for us as teachers and writers.

The first is that Writer-Based prose is not a composite of errors or a mistake that should be scrapped. Instead, it is a half-way place for many writers and often represents the results of an extensive search and selection process. As a stage in the composing process it may be a rich compilation of significant thoughts which cohere *for the writer* into a network she or he has not yet fully articulated. Writer-Based prose is the writer's homework, and so long as the writer is also the audience, it may even be a well-thought-out communication.

The second happy implication is that writing Reader-Based prose is often simply the task of transforming the groundwork laid in the first stage of the process.[29] Good analytical writing is not different in kind from the writer-based thought that seems to come naturally. It is an extension of our communication with ourselves transformed in certain predictible ways to meet the needs of the reader. The most general transformation is simply to try to take into account the reader's purpose in reading. Most people have well-developed strategies for doing this when they talk. For a variety of reasons—from cognitive effort to the illusion of the omniscient teacher/reader—many people simply do not consider the reader when they write.

More specifically, the transformations that produce Reader-Based writing include these:

Selecting a focus of mutual interest to both reader and writer (e.g., moving from the writer-based focus of "How did I go about my research or reading of the assignment and what did I see?" to a focus on "What sigificant conclusions can be drawn and why?").

Moving from facts, scenarios, and details to concepts.

Transforming a narrative or textbook structure into a rhetorical structure built on the logical and hierarchical relationships between ideas and organized around the purpose for writing, rather than the writer's process.

Teaching writers to recognize their own Writer-Based writing and transform it has a number of advantages. It places a strong positive value on writing that represents an effort and achievement for the writer even though it fails to communicate to the reader. This legitimate recognition of the uncommunicated content of Writer-Based prose can give anyone, but especially inexperienced writers, the confidence and motivation to go on. By defining writing as a multistage process (instead of a holistic act of "expression") we provide a rationale for editing and alert many writers to a problem they could handle once it is set apart from other problems and they deliberately set out to tackle it. By recognizing transformation as a special skill and task, we give writers a great degree of self-conscious control over the abilities they already have and a more precise introduction to some skills they may yet develop.

*Linda Flower*
*Carnegie-Mellon University*
*"Writer-Based Prose:*
*A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing"*

The difficult questions of standards, responsibility and purposes have a more basic form, which has largely been avoided in recent years. The question of what is good writing probably cannot have an absolute answer; this seems clear in literature, at least. Blake's dictum, "One law for the lion and the ox is oppression," has undeniable force in an age of pluralism. But the question still needs to be asked in writing instruction, if for no other reason that to indicate those features of better writing which are nearly absolute. And we should see that quality is an essential goal of writing, even if no one definition can suffice.

But apart from the concerns of assessment, we commonly mean more than surface correctness and comprehensibility when we speak of good writing. Consider, for example, this passage from Bill Russell's autobiography (1979) on an early reading experience:

> I was breezing along through a chapter on the American Revolution when I did a double take on one sentence. It was as if somebody had stuck a foot out there on the page and tripped my mind as it went by. I looked again, and this sentence jumped out at me: Despite the hardships they suffered most slaves enjoyed a higher standard of living and a better life in America than in their primitive African homeland.

As far as I can remember, this was the first time I was ever enraged.

In terms of standard usage and of comprehensibility, the sentence which tripped Russell up is faultless. Yet most would agree with Russell that this is not good writing because of the meaning conveyed. And obviously the effect produced is contrary to what was intended.

An analysis of this sentence shows a coldness and distance which helps make it offensive: the condescension of "primitive African homeland," the vagueness and altered context of "higher standard of living," and (at a more subtle level) the deceptive juxtaposition of "suffered" and "enjoyed"—making the latter word seem natural, when in fact it is a perversion of the slaves' experience. Such an analysis shows how much words count, whether or not the author intends their effect. And the matter is beyond just an arrangement of words; in this case, an issue of history and of justice inevitably becoming part of writing.

It is not realistic to expect that students can develop enough control over their own writing to avoid revealing obnoxious ideas, if indeed they have them. What may be appropriate, however, is the expectation that writing instruction should include developing a critical awareness of the meaning and implications of the ideas for which an author is responsible. And that students should learn to write in ways that more nearly serve their own purposes, without earning the rage of their audience.

A partial model for a fuller understanding of good writing is the work of Brazilian priest Paulo Freire (1972). Freire makes great progress teaching illiterate peasants to read and write through a process of political education built on the experience of inequity and social and economic contradiction which is already part of the adult's consciousness. For Freire there is not the traditional split between teacher and student, since the peasant learner is clearly more authoritative about the details and meaning of his or her own experience. Although this is a Marxist education, it is not exactly an ideological one. The purposes of communication are the peasant's own and can vary, though they are dominated by the facts of oppression.

In our country, most learners are not in a revolutionary situation. But this need not obscure the lesson that the least literate can begin to use language effectively when they begin to take control of their own ideas (and perhaps not before), that being able to write involves having something meaningful to say for one's own purposes. All English teachers know the students' complaint that they have nothing to say; and most also know that students almost always do have something to say, if there is reason to do so.

By this analysis good writing must have human validity as well as correctness and clarity. Writers need to define and justify their own purposes, and to be sensitive to their audience. A way of characterizing such writing would be as a part of a broad humanistic education—once the province of the English teacher, but now usually disregarded or defined defensively (e.g., as the contrary of career education, or as only suitable for those with a "good background.")

In fact it is remarkable that much of the best recent work in writing research and instruction has not had a humanistic flavor or bias. Rather, it has had a strong scientific tendency, even when done by English faculty, and it has involved social scientists in major ways. This is clear in the experimentation with new, "teacher proof" techniques. Sentence combining, for instance, is exercises done apart from overall considerations of meaning. The autotutorial and computer based approaches are of course impersonal, and focus on drill and those aspects of writing which can be done automatically. Practitioners are now inclined to deemphasize or exclude the learning of theory and concepts of language itself or of rhetoric.

Despite a gain in practical effectiveness, the new work still has a quality of insufficiency of incompleteness. At worst, writing becomes another technocratic activity, divorced from personal or social change. Some of the behavioral studies of writing performance describe writing as if it could be produced by a machine. Raising the question of purpose in writing, and of value, can't be postponed forever because writing itself depends on them. We know that though mechanical learning can be highly successful when it is reinforced, it does not lead to invention; yet writing requires at least an understanding of ideas and their relationship, and meaningful writing is original.

Writing instruction brings us squarely to the margin of practical and moral education. This is a classic dilemma, but it does not necessarily require a choice. The integration of the useful and the ethical, as of school, work and personal life, is an old ideal which keeps recurring. The present preference for pragmatic approaches is a major advance which nevertheless is reaching its limits.

A generation ago concern about poor writing was focused differently by George Orwell (1946). Orwell demonstrated that writing inevitably reveals its origins, and that bad writing is bad politics. In doing this he assumed a hierarchal standard of good writing (somewhat ironically, considering his socialism) involving more or less fixed usage, and plain syntax and diction. Nouns were not meant to be used as verbs, nor to be piled high with adjectives. Figures of speech had to be well understood and appropriate. Otherwise, selfdeception and lies were the like result.

In the new movement to improve writing, there has been no voice like Orwell's defining valid practice. We understand language differently now, and there is not a consensus about good writing.

Close to our own concerns and a truer guide than either Orwell or Freire is the work of Mina Shaughnessy, in *Errors and Expectations* (1977) and in her teaching. Shaughnessy's work with open admission students was both humanistic and rigorous. She assumed that students described by traditional faculty as "unteachable" were not that. She saw patterns to their errors which were interesting in themselves, and revealing of systematic efforts to cope. Toward the end of her life she was more and more interested in the problems of teaching adults to write and training teachers of writing. There were always practical problems, but never only that. She often quoted Jacques Barzun's line, that "the person who writes stands up to be shot." This is what makes writing instruction difficult, and worth doing.

It makes sense to begin with the basics, but not to end with them. The new learners who precipitated the writing "crisis" still have the most to gain by writing improvement. The best new practice in writing instruction tends to be highly realistic about being where the students are and consciously seeking elementary gains. But such instruction is not conceived of as sufficient, nor as a dead end.

*Richard Hendrix,*
*Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education*
*"The Status and Politics of Writing Instruction"*

# PART TWO—WRITING TEACHERS

## I. WHO ARE WRITING TEACHERS

Provoked by the crises in student writing during the last decade, a new dialogue about writing teachers is taking place in academia. Some of the most pertinent discussion centers on the question "Who are writing teachers?" No longer is the answer to that question simply: English teachers teach writing in their classrooms. With more and more students developing both thinking and writing problems, the notion of the teachings of writing has been expanded to include teaching in other disciplines as well. The following answers posed by the question "Who are writing teachers?" reflect the current discussion and present views of the writing teacher as an enabler and tutor.

* * *

A writing teacher is one who is concerned with freeing others to name their world, with enabling others to share what they think and who they are with others. To do this, the teacher must first know himself or herself well enough to understand how best to relate to others, particularly to others who write less well and bring to the classroom less conscious knowledge about language than does the teacher. A supportive, intelligent person who cares about others and is capable of encouraging them, yet is assertive enough to be demanding, can make a successful writing teacher.

The teacher of problem writers must possess empathy, the ability to see and feel where others are. He or she must be able to support and encourage others in their struggle to write more effectively. In this struggle, the teacher needs to show caring for others and needs to, where necessary, supply positive motivation. With some Basic Writers, a "kick in the pants" is literally needed; with others, a more gentle approach works better. The teacher needs the astuteness to determine who needs which motivation. The teacher should be non-oppressive, one who genuinely views students as equals and who is willing to create the decentralized classroom.

*Regina Rinderer, Southern Illinois*
*University at Carbondale*
*"The Person in The Composing Process;*
*A Theoretical Framework for Teaching and*
*Research in Composition"*

In guiding students in composition, the teacher has critical responsibilities: to help the student become more aware of his environment; to help him sharpen his perceptions, too often dulled by routine modes of expression and numbed by familiarity; and to encourage him to examine evidence critically.

*Yakira Frank*
*University of Connecticut*
*Letter to Networks*

It seems to me that anyone who is eliciting substantial amounts of writing from students ought to be a writing teacher. More narrowly, writing teachers are those who concentrate more upon the teaching of writing than upon the teaching of disciplinary content. A good writing teacher is one who teaches students *how* to write—who works with the writing process rather than the student's finished products.

*Janice Hays*
*Skidmore College*
*Letter to Networks*

Every teacher of every subject at every grade level is a teacher of writing and reading. Those teachers who believe that they are not writing teachers are nonetheless teaching students attitudes about writing.

The first step is to remind ourselves and then others that the teaching of writing and reading is essential to teaching in all fields. To say that scholars write is to say the obvious. One might as well add that teachers teach. Scholarship in all disciplines—across the curriculum—is defined by written texts. Scholars who offer students an apprenticeship in reading and in creating written texts in their fields are in that sense teachers of writing, experts in the rhetoric of their own disciplines.

Unfortunately, the world of twentieth-century American education has become so fragmented that teachers can delude themselves into thinking that they teach something called "content," while specialists teach reading, writing, and even thinking. Getting back to the basics ought to mean a return to a fundamental principle—a renewed commitment to teaching students to write, to read, and to think about content. Then all scholars, experts in the academic discourse of their own disciplines, would guide apprentices, not merely to know, but to express knowledge and thought first to themselves, then to each other, and finally to a wider audience.

*Elaine P. Maimon*
*Beaver College*
*"Cinderella to Hercules:*
*Demythalogizing Writing Across the Curriculum"*

## II. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WRITING TEACHERS

Though the question "Who is a writing teacher?" continues to draw disparate opinions from within the larger academic community, a question about the characteristics and responsibilities of writing teachers, particularly *good* writing teachers, elicits a consensus of thought. According to Janice Hays, a good writing teacher should be flexible in her teaching and should believe in herself as a teacher and in her students' ability. David Rankin and Regina Rinderer suggest that writing teachers should have knowledge about the discipline of composition and those heuristic devices that are most enabling. Above all, these writing teachers note, particularly Louise Knight and Steven Urkowitz, that writing teachers themselves must write in order to understand the writing process and the writer role that students engage in.

* * *

A good teacher has to believe in her students, to believe that she can teach them how to write, to have patience and understanding with the slowness of the learning process, to be flexible and willing to try something new if the something old isn't working. A writing teacher also needs to know the discipline of Composition; all the good intentions and kind thoughts in the world won't teach students to write if the instructor doesn't have an intelligent approach to the teaching of Composition that is based upon a knowledge of Composition theory and practice. To improve their skills, writing teachers should read (*College English, College Composition and Communication, Research in the Teaching of English, WPA, Writing Lab Newsletter, etc.*), should attend as many professional conferences and workshops as possible (these are springing up all over the country), and should talk to each other. Writing teachers should also *write* so that they know the problems that their students are facing in tackling a given assignment and some of the strategies that will be effective in solving these problems.

*Janice Hays*
*Skidmore College*
*Letter to Networks*

Writing teachers should be people who write—regularly. Familiarity with the writer's role and with the process of writing is essential to good instruction in writing. Beyond this, if is difficult to specify characteristics of good writing teachers. They come in all shapes and forms, all temperaments and philosophical dispositions. Most of them really know how language works, and they have the knack of helping the learner discover what he wants to say. I don't think that there is any one best style or method for teaching writing, so long as the teacher understands that the learner "owns" his compositions. Ideas are among the most

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personal forms of property. The teacher's job is to help the learner find the best form for the expression of ideas. Insofar as form is generative, good teachers of form contribute profoundly to the process of discovery that lies close to the heart of the discursive act.

Teachers burdened by large classes may not like to hear that their chief responsibility is to read student work carefully and to provide constructive criticism. But there is no other way to "teach" writing, certainly not by formal lectures on the principles of good prose. Writing is a private act that deserves private attention. It goes without saying that the criticism should be informed and should eschew the imposition of narrow stylistic bias on student work. It follows, then, that teachers at all levels should inform themselves of the research that compositon specialists are now producing. Writing has too often been taught in the absence of theoretical conviction or systematic methodology. The well-informed teacher is able to select a framework that gives purpose to his work. And that sense of purpose communicates itself to students in every detail of the teacher's method. Only teachers who are open to the possibility of improvement are capable of improving their skills. There is much to learn at workshops, conferences, in-service programs—for the teacher who values professional growth.

*David Rankin*
*California State University at Dominquez Hills*
*Letter to Networks*

The writing teacher of course knows much. The effective writing teacher for the problem writer brings to the teaching situation a set of knowings which are different from those we have traditionally encouraged. In addition to knowledge of rhetoric and literature, this writing teacher needs to know much about psychology, linguistics, and communication theory. Along with logic, poetics, literary theory, the teacher needs to understand language variation, language acquisition, the relationship between thought, speech, and language, and ways of teaching composition in a variety of educational settings. The teacher needs an awareness of dialect differences and a healthy appreciation for linguistic relativity. While demanding that students work toward the conventions of Edited American English, especially at the college level, the teacher needs a firm grasp of dialectology to understand possible sources for various errors, such as copula omission. The teacher needs an understanding of the various causes for errors.

The teacher should probably be one who does at least some self-initiated writing, as opposed to doing only academic writing on demand.

As well, the teacher should be one who loves to write—one who knows the pains, albeit, but the delights as well.

*Regina Rinderer*
*Southern Illinois University at Carbondale*
*"The Person in the Composing Process"*

To be a good writing teacher the first thing to be, of course, is a good teacher. If you are the teacher, can you translate a student's questions and answers into insights for your own use regarding what that student has learned and not learned? Can you teach a subject in digestible segments that are small enough to master but not so small that the essence of good writing does not remain present in them? Do you know how to praise a student specifically for what he has done well and give him some constructive criticism to go with it? These are some of the skills of the good teacher.

But are there special skills that go with being a good teacher of writing? Yes, and there are also special pitfalls. To take the pitfalls first: the good writing teacher should avoid correcting papers too excessively (by stressing grammar over other aspects of writing) and expecting perfection in what is really a student's first draft.

And the special skills? First, you must be a good writer yourself. That is, you must understand the nature of writing thoroughly enough that you can quickly sense what aspect of that nature a particular student has not yet understood. Second, you must have a good understanding of how the writing process works. In this category, I would put both understanding how to learn to write and understanding how to rewrite.

*Louise W. Knight*
*Duke University*
*Letter to Networks*

My teaching made sense to me only when I became a writer myself. So, more than research or pedagogical sophistication, writing teachers should be encouraged to write—newsletters, poems, articles, school papers, collections of student writings. The practical stress of publication and the real gratification of publication is a fine thing, unknown to many writing teachers and uncommunicated to students.

*Steven Urkowitz*
*Maritime College*
*Letter to Networks*

The idea voiced often in the literature—that teachers should be writers—is carefully developed in an article by Anne Ruggles Gere, "Teachers as Writers." She maintains that teachers see their own act of writing as indulgent and superfluous when they are faced with student papers daily. However, her program, which includes writing as a part of teaching, confirms the notion that frequent struggle with the word by teachers provides familarity with the complex process of composing. In his attempt to teach teachers as an administrator of a writing program, Joseph Trimmer made several important discoveries. Like others, he recognizes writing as a responsibility of teachers; however, his most important insight may be that all of us, including teachers of writing, will do "anything and everything to avoid writing."

* * *

Unlike their colleagues in, say, art or music, colleagues who find painting or performing an essential part of their teaching, many writing teachers see their own writing as superfluous to the task of instruction. Teacher consultants often change from writers into former writers as the academic year progresses.

Perhaps teachers fail to continue writing because they don't see writing as a specialized professional activity....

We must work continuously to convince teachers that their performance as writers is an integral part of their teaching responsibilities....

My private hunch—one not verifiable with existing research designs—is that teacher-writers not only make more effective instructors, but they have hedged against the forces of teacher burn-out. Through writing they avoid beign cut off from the sources of thier own power and creativity.

*Anne Ruggles Gere,*
*University of Washington*
*"Teachers as Writers"*

The most important thing I have learned from my colleagues is that none of us likes to write. When I assign weekly themes to my teachers, they want to know what kind of paper to bring, whether they can consult a dictionary, if they should prepare a rough draft, how will I grade, and whether I am going to write with them. We learn a lot about teaching writing by working our way through these processes of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. But we also learn, to our amazement and embarrassment, that we will do anything and everything to avoid writing—including teaching writing.

*Joseph F. Trimmer,*
*Ball State University (Indiana)*
*"If We Do Not Get Better,*
*We Will All Get Worse:*
*Writing Program-Administrators as*
*Teachers of Teachers"*

In examining the characteristics and responsibilities of teachers, several educators, Ken Davis and Ken Bruffee, offer unique suggestions for the teacher's role in the writing classroom. Ken Davis invites composition instructors to think of themselves as coaches. He sees the metaphor as a productive one in which the teaching-learning enterprise is shared more completely. Ken Bruffee's work on collaborative learning, a strategy discussed more fully later, expands the concept of shared-learning to include the community of students. In a collaborative learning situation, teachers are creators of conditions that foster exchange of judgement and opinion among students.

* * *

First, coaching is performace-oriented; the coach succeeds only as those he is coaching succeed. "Teaching," on the other hand, is often dichotomized against "learning," as if it were possible for the first to occur without the second.

A second strength of the coaching metaphor is that it keeps us aware, in poet Robert Creeley's words, that "writing is an activity, not a subject." Too often we substitute, in our classrooms, teaching *about* composition for teaching composition. No basketball coach lectures and holds discussions on the theory of basketball, then stays away from the gym while his team practices. Yet most writing teachers do just that — "preteaching" (to use Moffett's term) the theory of composition, then sending their students off to practice on their own.

A third reason to think of oneself as a coach, not a teacher, is that coaches give feedback when it is most useful — immediately after the action being coached — not at some later time. We writing teachers, since we're not "at the gym" with our students, rely on written comments, which we make a week or two after the game has been played.

In so doing, we go against one of the few things that can be known with certainty about learning: that feedback, to be most effective, must be given almost immediately. The writing coach in a workshop class takes full advantage of that principle; she gives strong, timely responses, not weak, week-old ones....

A fourth value of the metaphor of coaching is the assumption made by coaches that their students already have basic knowledge and skills. A college football coach, for example, does not spend time explaining what a goal line, a halfback, or a forward pass is. His players arrive at the first practice session with almost all the knowledge they need to play championship football; the coach's job is to help them refine their skills.

Exactly the same is true of freshman comp students: they arive at college with almost all the knowledge (certainly well over 99 percent of it) they need to become champion writers....

The fifth and, for now, last reason to call writing instructors "coaches" is that, to the beginner at least, coaching is a much less formidable task than teaching.

*Ken Davis*
*University of Kentucky*
*"Coaching Writing"*

The teacher's job in a writing course (and perhaps in other courses as well) is to create conditions in which learning can occur. Students have to do the learning themselves. Teachers set the stage for it.

In collaborative learning, students focus primarily on what each other has to say and on the way other students and they themselves apply their values in the process of making judgments and arriving at decisions. The teacher's role is *first*, to design judgmental tasks so that students will learn through this exchange; *second*, to organize the community of students so that exchange can occur effectively; *third*, to help students negotiate among themselves to resolve differences of opinion and judgment, help students understand why such differences occur, and supply information and experience to improve the quality of the judgment finally arrived at; and *fourth*, to evaluate the quality of student

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development during this process and their contribution to each other's learning. In this way, teachers teach judgment indirectly (certainly the best way it can be taught), by creating conditions in which learning judgment can occur: the conditions of collaborative learning.

*Ken Bruffee*
*Brooklyn College, CUNY*
*"Collaborative Learning"*

Teachers of writing have a unique responsibility because, according to Marie Lederman, they interfere with the lives of other human beigns in promoting the activity of writing. This responsibility is not limited to teachers in the English profession as both Hunter College and Michigan University indicate; it is shared by all teachers from discipline to discipline who recognize that writing is a way of understanding and mastering a subject.

* * *

We are, as teachers, limited. The reality is that we are *not* magicians with boundless powers (interesting image, that). But we are also not mere clinicians. We are not merely here to observe, correct, penalize, and, ultimately, to judge. Any computer can do that better and faster.

Unlike the computers (TRY AGAIN), we bear responsibility for what we do. There seems to be a connection between writing and feelings about the self. As teachers of writing, we are in a unique position to help our students to discover things which will permit them to live more comfortably with themselves as well as to communicate more comfortably with us. We are responsible for more than teaching writing; we are responsible for interfering, in some way, with the lives of other human beings.

*Marie Lederman*
*Resource Center of the City University*
*"A Comparison of Student Projections:*
*Magic and the Teaching of Writing"*

As Professor Josephine Miles of Berkeley reminds us, "...we know that good writing, like good thinking and feeling, can't be taught 'once and for all.'...students need help with writing at many stages...and from subject to subject...the accumulated abilities of the student need conscious and thoroughgoing adapting to the new material and maturity."[30] Students need help with writing beyond the writing program proper....

Yet we worry about not covering our subjects if we have to spend time in class on writing. We might worry less if we also thought of writing as a way of gaining understanding, discovering thoughts and mastering a subject.

*"Report on the Hunter College Faculty*
*Seminar on the Teaching of Writing in the*
*Subject Areas" Hunter College, CUNY*

So far as we know, for the first time in North American history a college faculty has voted to *impose upon itself* heavier teaching requirements. What's more, it has done this in full knowledge of the probable difficulties of the job.

When we talk about the Upperclass Writing component and its place in the composition curriculum, some of us tend toward use of a simple scheme to clarify its identity. This scheme divides the teaching of writing into three kinds of tasks. One is the task of teaching writing as an art. Another is the task of teaching writing as a constellation of skills. And third is the task of teaching writing as a process.

Unlike the teaching of writing as an art or a collection of skills—both of which tend to begin with the appearance of the product and then proceed to ask questions about its grooming—the teaching of writing as a process tends to begin with the thought process of the writer, called variously by such names as pre-writing and invention, and to proceed to ask questions about organization and argument. This scheme does not pretend that the skills and processes of writing are not inextricably entwined in many of their parts. What it does contend is that teachers of subjects other than English do not need to know much about diction and syntax in order to be able to use the special materials of their subjects to teach a great deal about organization and argument.

*Dan Fader*
*University of Michigan*
*"Proceedings"*

# III. THE PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN TEACHING WRITING

What role should the writing process play in students' lives? Should one concentrate on process or product in teaching writing? Does personal writing precede standard esssy writing? Should composing and editing be taught together? Just how does the composing process work? These questions and others form the core of philosophical issues facing writing teachers. They cause debate at professional meetings and generate thinking and innovation in classroom procedures. Before considering the answers to these questions, an exploration of some of the misconceptions about teaching writing is provided. In her experience as a Director of Writing Lab, Jennie Skerl suggests that these misconceptions on the part of faculty members inhibit the effectiveness of writing programs. An exploration of another kind is offered by Michael Holzman in his recounting of the evolution of a writing course and the concomittant pedagogical search.

* * *

There are three common misconceptions about writing that are prevalent among college professors. The first is the idea that teaching writing on the college level is a remedial task rather than a developmental one. The second is that writing is a test rather than a learning process. The third is that writing is a technology concerned with stylistic niceties and grammatical correctness rather than with the organization and development of ideas. These three basic misconceptions lead to not teaching writing at all or poor teaching methods that turn off students. I believe that no writing program can be effective unless faculty as a whole are educated along with the students about the developmental, humanistic process of writing.

First, let's look at the idea that writing is a "remedial" subject on the college level....

This attitude stems from a misconception of the nature of verbal skills and the process of verbal development and an ignorance of significant research that has been done in linguistics, language-learning, and the development of writing skills. In fact maturity in writing ability coincides with growth in cognitive ability, a development which is not completed at the end of high school. (Piaget's level of formal operations is not attained by some students until the age of 19 or 20.) College students must undergo an intensive period of training and growth if they are to develop professional-level cognitive and writing skills. This means that writing on the college level is necessary to intellectual growth and is by no means a remedial subject.

I also point to the research of Kellogg, Hunt and O'Donnell and the sentence-combining research of Mellon, O'Hare, Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg as empirical evidence of the developmental nature of writing and the continued development of writing ability after high school and throughout adulthood. Syntactic maturity can be measured quantitatively, and it has been shown that the difference in syntactic maturity between a 12th grader and a professional adult writer is as great as the difference between a 4th grader and a 12th grader. These findings show us that a lot of development should be fostered in the college years in which we are preparing students for work as professionals.

The second major misconception about writing is the testing orientation. That is the idea that writing is that final typed product on the page which the teacher rates acceptable or defective and returns. Student response is displayed and judged only in terms of the end product, and the product is then passed or failed without any consideration given to how to produce the desired result, or what went into the production, or what individual differences may have led to different results. The teacher's role is to mark the errors the student missed. Thus the teaching of writing is reduced to error avoidance and error correction.

Faculty need to be made aware that writing is a process far more complex than error avoidance. First of all, writing is a communication process that needs to be taught and evaluated in those terms. I'm speaking of the rhetorical context of writer, audience, subject, and purpose which is rarely defined for students in subject matter courses and often leads to a certain kind of nonsense writing. Also, as all of us writing teachers know, the composition of a particular piece of writing is a process consisting of many steps which may be summarized as planning, pre-writing, drafting, editing, proofreading, "publication," feedback, and revision. To teach writing effectively the teacher must guide students through the entire process, not just the editing process. And the learning process is identical with the writing process: write/feedback/rewrite.

The third prevalent misconception among college faculty is that writing is a technology concerned with stylistic niceties and grammar correction rather than the organization and development of ideas. There is a tendency to think that ideas can be separated from the writing and evaluated in the abstract and that good writing means learning style and grammar rules and applying them to the subject—like an external technique. Students are also left in the dark about how to become effective writers which, in the academic setting, means mastering the analytical thought process we call critical thinking. The goal of all college education is critical thinking, most often displayed through writing. So a teacher who refuses to show students how to think, how to organize and present ideas analytically, is refusing to teach the higher cognitive processes— Piaget's formal operations. These teachers are also misleading students into thinking that writing is just a matter of "dressing up" ideas in prose rather than a particular form of thinking. Faculty could get far better results in the assignments their students turn in if they gave just a little time to explaining how to organize, how to analyze, how to develop, support, give reasons, and if they commented on this aspect of student writing more frequently than on word choice, verb tenses, and spelling errors or typos. It is important to realize that every piece of writing— no matter what the subject— always involves the whole person every time. That is why it is a humanistic activity, not a technology.

All three of the basic misconceptions I've discussed underlie the idea that teaching is someone else's job— the specialists in remediation and the technology of writing. All three lead to counterproductive approaches to teaching writing. As

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long as facutly and students maintain these attitudes, student writing will be a "problem" that we always have with us, like the poor, one in which the more "technology" we apply, the more "problems" we have.

*Jennie Skerl*
*Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*
*"The Writing Lab as a Focus for Faculty Education"*

The founder of our program saw that the problems that students had with their writing were derived from their college prepatory high school training. They could write in the offical style, but they had no style of their own. They could also repeat "official" ideas, but they had difficulty expressing their own thoughts, communicating their own perceptions of the world in a written language which corresponded with their personal voice. Consequently he designed a program that stressed the writing of personal narratives....

After a few weeks the students were writing in a personal voice on topics that were interesting, at least to them. They continued to do this for the remaining weeks of their first quarter of the course and for the entire ten weeks of the second quarter. This was nice, but we soon found that we had a new set of problems. Our liberated students, who had learned beautiful handwriting, who were frank and open about their personal lives, who took the correct line on campus issues such as RAND Corporation recruiting and daycare, could not write conventional academic essays....

We concluded that a college writing program should train students to write papers that would further their undergraduate careers, as well as educate those same students to look critically both at the university and at the society at large. Our earnest exploratory dialogues had brought us back to the goals of traditional composition, in substance, if not in attitude. We had come to believe that our goal as writing teachers was to teach our students to write standard English, when they chose, to write good academic essays, when they chose. We did, however, stay with our earlier belief that they should also have a lively personal prose style for appropriate occasions and for leaven in their formal English. Not an earthshaking conclusion, but one that we thought we had earned the right to: we had reinvented our conventional ideas. We thought this better than having simply accepted them.

We decided to stick to our liberated quarter of free writing, and follow it with a quarter of analytical writing, based on readings of books which were themselves analytical. We were beginning to be clearer about our goals, and as that happened we found our methodological decisions to be following from those goals. On the other hand, it could be that as we thought about methodology, our goals became clearer. In any case, we noticed that we had decided that we were not dealing with a form/content problem, but with a form/methodology problem. We wished our students to be able to write standard essays, but not standard thoughts, and we hoped to avoid the latter through teaching a way of thinking....

It was necessary, we thought, to find books for them to read that were not superficial, that would teach analytical and critical thought, by example, as well as having the proper negative critique of the actual. It seemed natural, then, that we turned to books dealing with the philosophical basis of sociology, even though these were rather heavy going for freshman. Surprisingly, many of our students read these, and, to some extent, understood the critique of language which was at the center of most of them. The difficulty shifted to the task of finding instructors who understood the texts well enough to explain them....

Why the students improved was not obvious, but we suspected that it was a combination of sheer practice in writing and the analytical discipline acquired through the readings. Our best students developed flexible and personal writing styles that coped well with the dificult subject matter of the second half of the course. Small classes (averaging 15 students), selective admission requirements, carefully selected instructors and a movement from personal narrative to expository writing in a workshop classroom appeared to combine well as a way of preparing students for academic writing.

*Michael Holzman*
*University of Southern California*
*"Theory, Research, and Pedagogy"*

Traditionally, composition has been dominated by the "product-approach" to teaching writing. This approach which focuses on errors in the finished product faces a challenge by educators who concentrate intently on the composing process itself. Their research discloses writing as a discovering process, a search for meaning that only evolves as the writer experiences the act of writing. In a discussion of the philosophical issues in teaching writing, Janice Hays captures the current dilemma when she indicates that teachers must decide whether to stress process, product, or person. A recent letter by Sondra Perl articulates her choice of process as an approach to teaching. In an excerpt from her forthcoming book, Elaine Maimon explores the transition that occurs from writer-based prose to reader-based prose in the writing process of students. Like Maimon, Perl's recent study of five adult, unskilled writers indicates that the composing process is a retrospective structuring, and she formulates four hypotheses about the experience of writing. Though Perl contends that "writers know more fully what they mean only after having written it," Carolyn Kirkpatrick proposes basic steps that beginning writers must take in learning how to write. In addition, Paula Beck maintains that teaching the standard four paragraph essay is useful for students who learn to apply the structure in writing for other classes.

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The teacher has to decide whether to concentrate upon process, upon product, or upon person (students themselves and their self-actualization through writing). In the average college freshperson English class, I would hope that the teacher would decide to concentrate upon process— upon teaching students how to write at every stage of that process, from invention to editing and proof-reading. To concentrate upon product is to become an editor rather than a teacher; if we want superior products from our students, we must first teach them how to produce. To concentrate upon person, as tempting as this course may be, is ultimately, I believe, to do a disservice to our students. Expressive writing is fun and both students and teachers like to do it. For this reason, and because expressive writing can be a useful vehicle for teaching some of the techniques of description and narration, it has its place in the beginning stages of the college writing course. But at some point our students must learn to do analytical writing competently, and "personal writing" simply won't teach them how to do this. (This is not to say that English Departments and writing programs should not offer courses in personal writing in the same way that they offer courses in creative writing.)

*Janice Hays*
*Skidmore College*
*Letter to Networks*

An overriding problem in our field has been an attention to the written product without a corresponding interest in the process of writing. Once we understand how the composing process works, we often see that what we've been saying in classes is appropriate for analyzing *finished* pieces of discourse but not for creating them. We need guidelines for engaging in the process of writing as well as criteria for evaluating what we have done.

A process approach in the classroom begins with the act of writing. Attention is focused on *how* students (of any age) write and on the discoveries they make while writing. Often the text for the class is the students' writing. Pieces in various modes, genres and stages of completion are shared. Writers read and respond to each others' work. Techniques for listening and responding to writing are demonstrated. The recursive nature of the writing process is explored. The role of the audience is examined. Corrections and rules for standard English are discussed within this context.

*Sondra Perl*
*Lehman College, CUNY*
*Letter to Networks*

It is most important to remember as you push out that first draft, that you are involved in a creative process. Students sometimes make a false distinction between academic writing and "creative" writing. They assume that only the writing of fiction, poetry, or drama is a creative activity. And frequently the literary writing of these students is more fanciful than creative. Imagining purple elephants on Broadway is much easier to do than imagining the preconceptions that practicing sociologists might bring to the reading of your paper on race relations. Writing academic papers is a challenging and rewarding process. Beginning writers do not realize that professional writers often take a long time to get started on a project and that they expect to revise many times. Beginners and professionals both must craft their meaning stage by stage in the creative process of getting thoughts down in words.

In academic writing, as in other creative processes, it is important to plan a period of incubation, a time when you simply stop writing and do something else, while you let your mind continue to work on the problems of the paper. Students frequently neglect to allow enough time for incubation or they go to the other extreme and count too much on the powers of the mysterious unconscious.

A period of rest is particularly important after you have completed a first draft because a lapse in time will help you to see your writing as others might see it. There is nothing wrong about using a first draft to clarify your ideas to yourself. In fact, a helpful way to get yourself to write the connected sentences and paragraphs of a first draft is to admit to yourself quite candidly that your purpose at this stage is to talk to yourself. Professor Linda Flower of Carngie-Mellon University uses the term "writer-based prose" to refer to egocentric writing of this kind. She points out that egocentrism at this stage is not selfishness but instead a strategy of first expressing ideas in a form accessible and useful to the writer before trying to transform these ideas to meet the needs of a reader. On complex projects you should permit yourself some early egocentrism which will pay off later in a more readable finished paper.

Writer-based prose focuses more on the writer—his feelings, his discovery process—than on the information or on the needs of a reader to understand that information. Nearly all formal, academic writing must finally focus on the communication of information and concepts. But recording your responses and telling about your procedures will give you a chance later to manipulate your information in recorded form....

Many students need to learn to let the writer-based prose flow freely on their early drafts, which are not written to be assessed by readers anyway. A draft of writer-based prose can be "mined" very productively for hidden structures which can serve as organizing principles for later drafts. Writer-based prose also tends to be filled with the writer's own "code words," which need, as Linda Flower says, to be "pushed." Code words are terse expressions that are heavy with meaning for the writer but not for the reader. Just as writers need to search through first drafts for personal abbreviations and then on later drafts write out these words in full, writers should also look for conceptual abbreviations, concepts that are merely referred to rather than explored, and write these out in full for the reader....

To revise means literally to see again. The key task during the revision process is to see your paper as others will see it.

In most cases you will be better off if you imagine a group of readers that includes your instructor *and* your classmates in the course. The imagined presence of the instructor should keep you from lapsing into slang and remind you to follow the conventions of the appropriate academic discipline, but the imagined presence of your classmates should keep your explanations clear and your context sufficient.

The responses of a real audience will help you to see quite clearly the differences between writer-based and reader-based prose. You will find that there is frequently a subtle battle going on between a writer and a reader, with each one trying to expend the lesser amount of energy. When you have a stake in getting your information or ideas across, you are entering a buyer's market, and you should learn all that you can about accommodating the needs of your "buyers," i.e., your readers.

Your readers, above all, want to know your point in writing, and they want to know this as efficiently as possible. They do not want to wade through a chronological account of your research process. They need to be reminded frequently of what you are talking about. If you want them to connect two ideas, you have to do the work of forming the connection. Finally, they do not want to be distracted by clumsy sentence structure, misapplied marks of punctuation, inaccurate spelling, or careless proof-reading.

*Elaine Maimon,*
*Beaver College*
*"Writing in the Liberal Arts"*
*Chapter 1*

Composing does not occur in a straightforward, linear fashion. The process is one of accumulating discrete words or phrases down on the paper and then working from these bits to reflect upon, structure, and then further develop what one means to say. It can be thought of as a kind of "retrospective structuring"; movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go. Both aspects, the reaching back and the sensing forward, have a clarifying effect.

The development of meaning through writing always involves some measure of both construction and discovery. Writers construct their discourse inasmuch as they begin with an implicit sense of what they want to write. This sense, as long as it remains implicit, is not equivalent to the explicit form that it gives rise to. Thus a process of constructing meaning is required. Rereading or backward movements become a way of assessing whether or not the words on the page adequately capture the original sense intended. But constructing simultaneously involves discovery. Writers know more fully what they mean only after having written it. In this way the explicit written form serves as a window on the implicit sense with which one began.

With these students editing intrudes so often and to such a degree that it breaks down the rhythms generated by thinking and writing. When this happens the students are forced to go back and recapture the strands of their thinking once the editing operation has been completed. Thus editing occurs prematurely, before the writers have generated enough discourse to approximate the ideas they have, and it often results in their losing track of their ideas.

Editing is primarily an exercise in error-hunting. These students are prematurely concerned with the "look" of their writing; thus, as soon as a few words are written on the paper, detection and correction of errors replaces writing and revising.

*Sondra Perl*
*Lehman College, CUNY*
*"Unskilled Writers As Composers"*

Learning to write is truly a *developmental* process. If we start by arbitrarily determining what we want our students to learn in a given course— essay organization, for example—and our students aren't yet ready for that level, it doesn't matter how many times we teach organization, or in how many ways: the students can't succeed. In learning to write, certain steps simply have to be taken before others can be.

And we've learned much about the steps that students must take to achieve competence in edited American English. For example, personal expression *must* precede the kind of impersonal writing about generalized truths that prevails in academic and public life. Unless beginning writers understand that writing is, likely to be able to make much use of outlining procedures; that is, only then can and perceptions, everything that follows is sure to go wrong.

We've learned something, though not nearly enough, about the relative difficulty of the writing tasks we assign. Many that seemed simple to us turned out to impose formidable demands on students. For example, before students are ready to work on the organization of their writing in a conscious, systematic way, they need to go through at least three crucial preceding steps:

(1) Being able to focus on a single topic and to understand the convention that a piece of writing demands sticking to a clear, defined point;
(2) Being able to develop a relatively uncomplicated topic at some length, with relevant and persuasive details;
(3) Becoming aware of the structure and organization naturally inherent in their own writing.

That is to say, students will learn best about paragraph structure if they look for the ideas already present in what they have written, or implied by what they have written. They can then learn to develop these ideas as separate paragraphs that grow naturally out of what they are trying to express. Only at this point are they likely to be able to make much use of outlining procedures; that is, only then can most students *start* with a plan for organizing their paper that will help them say what they want to say, instead of preventing them from saying much at all. In other words, work on organization, as such, demands a distance from one's own ideas that most beginning writers have not yet developed.

*Carolyn Kirkpatrick*
*York College, CUNY*
*"Critical Issues in Writing"*

For me writing on the freshman level is a craft not an art. I'm interested in teaching freshmen a logical format for communicating ideas (the formula or standard four-paragraph essay), one that they can apply in all their humanities and social science courses, and the basic skills to communicating clearly, if not effectively or artfully. My goals for freshman writing are rudimentary. I want my students to get through a two-year college and if they don't transfer to a four-year college where they, presumably, will cultivate those skills they've mastered, to be able to write clear memos and reports in their jobs. I think that teaching the "fine points" of expository style to inexperienced and often unmotivated community college freshmen is meaningless.

Consequently, I read each student paper as though I were in a one-to-one tutoring situation. I start with the logical framework—thesis and development—and move from there to the mechanics, writing each student an endnote making suggestions for revision in that order. Depending on the student, my suggestions are more or less complex. If, for example, a student has no concept of thesis-development, I limit myself to helping him/her work on that. If, on the other hand, a student has this logical sense but can't write a kernel sentence, I urge him/her to work on that. My approach is obviously pragmatic. If I can teach a student in freshman composition only to write simple sentences, I feel this is an acceptable goal. With the class as a whole I make sentence combining in groups part of the regular routine so that even students with minimal skills become aware of the options that eventually will be available to them.

*Paula Beck*
*Nassau Community College*
*Letter to Networks*

The philosophical examination of the relationship between language and thought yields practical insights for writing teachers. Realizing that the problems of beginning writers arise from inexperience with written language rather than lack of thought, Michael Southwell advocates a simple, direct rhetorical situation for basic writers. Both David Rankin and Ann Berthoff conceive of the writing experience as a way of knowing not just expressing. For Berthoff, in the act of writing, critical thought is at stake, and teaching writing is a matter of teaching students to think critically.

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Mina Shaughnessy (in *Errors and Expectations* Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 1977) points out that the problems of basic writer arise not from stupidity but from inexperience; they are beginning writers. Having written hardly anything before arriving in their remedial composition classes, they have a lot of difficulty writing down anything whatsoever, even their own thoughts and spontaneous statements. They may be skillful at oral communication, but they tend to be very inefficient at direct written communication, even when they're writing something uncomplicated, something which they could easily express orally. As inexperienced writers, they simply aren't accustomed to expressing their opinions in writing.

The conventional wisdom is that it helps inexperiened or timid writers like these for us to specify the mode and purpose of the writing. But McCleary recognizes the burden that this puts on students: "No matter how esoteric the assignment, average and above-average students should be able to make a reasonable stab at it because they would at least have read similar kinds of material or performed a similar task orally" (p. 275). For students whose writing skills are below average, however, often far below average, a reasonable stab is quite unlikely. Basic writing students don't have enough experience with writing situations of *any* kind to have very much chance of succeeding when they're put into a situation which (for them) is very artificial. To ask students like these to imagine that they are (for example) writing a letter to their school newspaper about the new parking regulations, is to ask for trouble. It's hard enough for them to write an actual letter to the newspaper; writing an imaginary letter is close to impossible. The truth is that specifying aim and mode simply increases the amount of information that must be processed, and thus (for basic writing students) usually results in writing which is more inept than usual. This writing gives a false impression of the writers' competence.

In actual fact, most basic writing students understand perfectly well the classic student-teacher rhetorical situation: students write in order to express their thoughts and ideas to their teachers (and occasionally to their fellow students), and in order to show their competence at writing down ideas. They recognize that they are almost always in a testing situation when they write something in their classes, and they accept this fact. But they are understandably confused when they're asked to do something which they have never done, and would not be likely to do themselves.

The time has come, I believe, to recognize that it is simplistic to assume that specifying the aim and mode of discourse is universally helpful; for basic writing students, it is not helpful. What we should give basic writing students is not more possibility of confusion, but less.

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*"A Note on Specifying the Mode and Aim*
*of Written Discourse for Basic Writing*
*Students"*

The main question is, What is the purpose of the writing course? Stated so simply, the question may not seem "philosophical," but in fact it is a complex question that leads directly to most of the important questions that a writing teacher must confront. Another way to put the question is, What do I want my students to be able to do in prose discourse as a result of my instruction? One answer that might be given by most teachers of writing is: to write compositions that are clear and correct, organized and developed. But for some teachers such an objective might not rank high on their list of priorities. They might be willing to settle for less formal proficiency if student writing is "thoughtful," or "creative," or affectingly expressive. I speak here of differences in emphasis, of course; but those differences do signal philosophical positions. If the teacher believes, for instance, that writing is a way of knowing as well as expressing the world, then his purpose—and hence his methods, assignments, and expectations—will differ from that of the teacher who aims chiefly for formal effectiveness.

A teacher's philosophical stance (including nihilism) is reflected in everything he does, whether or not he is conscious of acting on philosophical assumptions. The teacher who asks himself, What role should the writing process play in my students' lives? has at least the advantage of beginning a course with a governing concept. In dealing with the ramifications of that question, he will come to terms with the relations between thought and language and experience. Instruction in all of the language arts is based ultimately in a theory of communication. To the extent that such a theory embraces the human capacity for growth in the act of evaluating and expressing experience, it touches the oldest of all philosophical concerns: What is Man?

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*Letter to Networks*

I want to claim—I won't have time to argue the case—that teaching writing is a matter chiefly of teaching critical thinking. Writing consists of two phases, composing and editing. It is composing that you can teach, not editing. What that comes to, really, is that you can teach paragraphing, not sentence structure. As Gertrude Stein notes in *Narration:* "So paragraphing is a thing that anyone is enjoying and sentences are less fascinating." Composing is a process: it includes both pre-writing, and re-writing, which are integral to the process—as editing is not. Composing is a matter of forming structures; editing is a matter of identifying and correcting faulty sentences.

We can all teach writing, insofar as we teach the composing procss. We will need to consider writing in the context of the other uses of language: speaking, hearing and reading. By stressing these other uses of language, I mean to emphasize the hazards of thinking of writing in the core courses as "the composition component." Writing is not like a spark plug or a fan belt and if we think of it as an element with a definite assigned place in a system, then we lose the chance of learning to make it available as a mode of learning, to use it as a mode of teaching....

Critical thinking is the capacity to see relationships methodically. That's pedagogically useful because, first of all, we can identify relationships: they are spatial, temporal and causal; they can be classified, defined, rehearsed, rediscovered continually—whatever the topic, whatever the field. We teachers are considering relationships—seeing them—when we discuss parts and wholes, beginnings and ends, ends and means, *now* and *then, if* and *then,* and how X is like Y with respect to Z. And we can teach students to do this methodically, once we deliberately consider how it is that we, as scholars in one field or another, make sense of the data; how we organize the knowledge of a field; how we make sense of the world or a universe of discourse. Happily, seeing relationships methodically is as much the defining characteristic of coherent writing as it is of cogent thinking: that's why we can teach critical thinking by means of teaching writing, and vice versa.

In learning to do that, we will need ways to discourage the notion that language is a set of molds into which we pour our incandescent thoughts: language and thought do not bear one another a temporal relationship. But to avoid the metaphysical entanglements which threaten us in considering the relationship of language and thought, it helps in teaching writing to remember that composing is a process of making meaning. Not that "meaning" is easier to define than "language" and "thought," but we don't need to define it! I follow Susanne Langer's advice about the definition of "mind"; what we need is not a definition but working concepts. We just need the concept of meaning as both ends and means: a principal meaning of meaning is that it is a means to the making of meaning. That circularity does wonders, I think, in helping us imagine ways of using writing all along the way when we are teaching critical thinking—not as a final super-mold to pour the course into—the term paper—but as an instrumentality for defining and designing and following a course of study.

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*"Speculative Instruments: Language in the Core"*

# IV. STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING

In the professional world, writing is a goal-oriented, intellectual activity involving thought and inquiry; within classroom walls it too often consists of arranging already existing ideas according to a writing formula or set of rules. In an attempt to explore more possibilities within the act of writing, educators have evolved innovative strategies for the teaching of writing. Three of these strategies—free writing, collaborative learning, and problem solving—develop the unused potential in the teaching situation by tapping the power of other perspectives and vocabularies. All three provide techniques that generate new thought in various writing circumstances and transfer from one classroom to another. According to Nancy Sommers, another strategy, revision, should occur continually during the writing of a work as students discover a structure to match their meaning. Joseph Trimmer, however, describes the revision process as a separate strategy supplying three commandments: See me, See the teacher, and See writing as a continuing process. In a review of methodology preference, Janice Hays maintains a distinction between approaches used in basic writing courses and in advanced courses, though both she observes, use peer-group critiquing, a technique similar to the notion of collaborative learning presented by Ken Bruffee.

* * *

In recent years, the number of students admitted to college with severe writing problems has increased dramatically. Many of us who teach remedial composition classes often feel rather desperate; usually having had no preparation whatsoever for dealing with the problems faced by these students, we wonder just what we can do to help them. None of the techniques we've built up by teaching traditionally prepared students seems to work. Over the last several years, I've found a way to help such students by requiring them to do free writing. Though I've been particularly interested in working with this special group of students, who need large amounts of remediation, free writing seems helpful also for students with less severe writing problems.

Though the students are free to write whatever they want, there are two rules which must be followed. The first is that the teacher may never collect the student's free writing. I can't emphasize too stongly how important this is. Free writing can't ever be truly free if it's examined by the teacher, even if that teacher has the most benevolent of intentions.

The second rule is that the student must write without ever stopping, even for a second. This will require the teacher, for the first few days at least, to keep reminding the students that they aren't permitted to stop, even if they have to repeat themselves or write what's really nothing more than filler ("I can't think of anything to say I can't think of anything to say"). After the first few days (when free writing should be limited to just four or five minutes), they always find free writing easier; and after a couple of weeks, they can all write for fifteen minutes or so without needing to stop.

Though their initial reaction may be that there will be nothing to say, they learn as soon as they start writing that there is much to say, that in fact they could spend the whole hour writing about (for example) the coin, and not get close to finishing. The students have discovered that they can write more than they would ever want to, even on a topic which has been given to them. When they realize this, they've come very far indeed from where they were when the class began.

I've been suggesting, then, that systematic practice of free writing has an important benefit for students with severe writing problems: it gets them past the barrier of beginning to write, and makes them confident that they have something worthwhile to say. I'd like to turn now to a topic I've glossed over in what I've been saying, the problem of *how* they should say what they want to say. This will introduce a second benefit of free writing.

After a couple of weeks of free writing, I ask the students what differences, if any, they see between the kind of writing they do for free writing, and that they do on the papers they prepare to hand in to me. A good time to do this is on a day when a paper is due. Their answers are likely to be something like the following:

> In free writing I don't use any punctuation or paragraphs at all, but in papers I do; I write about lots of different ideas in free writing, whatever occurs to me, but in papers I have a plan, and try to stick to one point; I don't pay any attention to spelling in free writing, but I try to spell words correctly in my papers.

The fact that in their papers they actually have no punctuation or paragraphs, many different ideas and no apparent plan, and misspelled words, is quite immaterial; the point is that the students are able to distinguish between two different kinds of writing, even if they can't do both of them: one, a kind of writing where concern for such things as a single point, a plan, logical paragraphs, and correctness, is *not* necessary—this is free writing; and the other, a kind where such concern *is* necessary—this is the writing one does for a paper.

What has happened is extremely important: the students themselves have formulated requirements for the papers they are going to be writing. Further, a standard has been extablished against which their papers can be judged; the problems they may have in writing their papers have been illuminated, not *for* them but *by* them. The way is thus open for me to help them to correct their papers....

I've tried to suggest, then, how free writing can be used as a sort of preparation for writing papers: it can reassure students that they have plenty to say, and it can make them willing to be careful in saying it. But free writing has other uses, also, and I'll conclude by naming some of them. For one thing, free writing can provide topics for students to work up into papers later. I've had success by assigning a paper on some subject previously written about in free writing. This in not very different from a paper on any subject they may wish to write on, but the student's collection of free writing (and they should save it all) can provide ready sources of topics they have already wanted to write about.

More importantly, free writing is an invaluable technique for generating ideas to be used in writing a paper. After about the first third of the semester, when I leave free writing behind as a regular part of class, I suggest to students that they begin writing papers by free writing on the topic they've chosen or been assigned. After having done free writing, they will have a pretty good idea of what they want to say on that subject. Later, they can arrange their ideas in some sensible way, and correct their writing. Students who write papers like this will never fall into the all-too-common fault of beginning writing on one side of an argument and ending on the other. Free writing thus lets them find out just *what* they have to say, without having to worry at the same time about *how* to say it. Isn't this, by the way, just how most of us write papers. 31 Instead of trying to organize abstract ideas in some coherent way, and then flesh them out with specific ideas, don't we usually juggle around the specific ideas we have, until the generalities emerge? One can't arrange ideas one hardly yet has....

Perhaps most importantly, though also most intangibly, free writing is a way of showing students that personalizing their papers is not only acceptable but even desirable. We've all read plenty of dull, dreary papers, where nothing could be more obvious than that the students couldn't care less about what they're writing. These are papers with no feelings at all. Free writing is seldom if ever like this—at least I believe it isn't, for of course I don't ever see what the students write. It shouldn't be [Students who write only what they want to can't help but write personally, with feeling, and this personal quality of free writing (and students assure me that it has it) begins eventually to transfer itself to their papers.] Students start writing papers which grow out of their feelings, papers containing ideas they care about—or at least many of them do. These papers are alive, not dead. And these papers have a good chance of being correctly written, or at least approaching correctness, for students who care about what they are saying care about how they say it. And students who care about what they are saying make others care also.

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The most important text in learning to write is the work of the writers themselves. People learning to write—at any stage—have to get to know each other as writers. In the process of getting to know each other's writing, they get a fuller and more critical understanding of their own work.

Writers therefore need to make their work public, just as composers and playwrights need to have their work performed. Knowing each other's work helps writers develop responsibility for what they have to say, and the courage to say it, through the immediate response of a community of sympathetic peers. This response helps diminish the obsessively private quality which tends to make writing futile and self-involved for so many inexperienced writers. Immediate response also helps to give writers a sense of a real and alive audience. It helps them open their eyes and see what they have put on the page.

One of the oldest—in fact, the original—and certainly the easiest, friendliest, and most economical means of publication is reading aloud. Writers in a writing course should read as much of their work as possible aloud to each other, so that they begin to develop, right from the start, a sense of trust among themselves. Writing is a social phenomenon, and reading aloud makes learning to write a social act. It is the first step toward turning a group of individuals into a learning community and turning a class into a workshop for working with words. Reading aloud is also the first step in overcoming writers' self-consciousness and anxiety about writing.

In time, and with practice, reading their own work and hearing other writers' work read aloud will help develop writers' critical awareness. Their own sense of form will improve as they realize that they can *hear* relationships among ideas and among the parts of a defense or explanation of an idea. Because of this sharper sense of others' writing, their own writing will improve. They will gain confidence in the value of their own words and ideas because they will learn that other writers *are* interested in what they have to say. They will also learn what other writers are interested in by hearing what they write about. This way they will get more topics to write on than they have time for. And they will become increasingly sensitive to triviality, excessive generality, and errors in usage and logic.

Finally, writers who read their work aloud and hear other writers read their work aloud will begin to write by ear. A lot of awkwardness and pretentiousness in writing results from seeing writing on the page instead of hearing it there. Reading aloud helps writers learn to hear what they write as they write it. This is a step toward a measure of stylistic grace and simplicity and toward increased appreciation for the qualities of language.

Some teachers and students may find reading papers aloud in this way objectionable because inexperienced writers may be embarrassed by the faults and limitations of their writing. Teachers therefore sometimes read students' papers aloud themselves in order to preserve the authors' anonymity.

This is misplaced discretion. Writing is by definition not anonymous. Writing makes our private thoughts public. We write in order to make accessible to other people some part of ourselves otherwise hidden within ourselves. Certainly we make mistakes in learning to do that well, and making mistakes may temporarily embarrass us. But embarrassment is a form of self-awareness, and self-awareness is the key to better writing. If the group of writers is an understanding and friendly one, embarrassment need not occur at all. Writers will simply hear their mistakes—and each others—and learn not to make those mistakes again.

Because writing is an essentially public act, there are also some issues involved in the question of anonymity more fundamental and serious than embarrassment. When teachers choose essays and read them aloud anonymously, they exercise power arbitrarily and, in fact, cruelly. If the essays are good ones, anonymity deprives their authors of due recognition by their peers—the chance to star. If the essays that teachers read aloud are not so good, the authors are the only other people in the room besides the teacher who can identify the work. As a result, they cannot defend their work without exposing themselves. The messages they receive from the teacher, furthermore, are that (1) the paper is so bad that to acknowledge it would be humiliating, (2) to "make mistakes" is an ignominious fault which must be hidden, and (3) writers must depend upon the protection of teachers to avoid ignominy. In this way, anonymity increases writers' fear of exposure through their work, and it discourages them from talking about their work among themselves. Anonymity destroys trust rather then building it. Writing becomes less an exchange among peers and more a form of privileged exchange between student and teacher.

In short, anonymity in writing is a form of censorship. It has no place in a healthy, coherent, working group, which a writing class must be.

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*"Collaborative Learning"*

A problem-solving approach to writing offers an alternative strategy for confronting the thinking process. The remainder of this paper will present an overview of the heuristics we have learned from protocol analysis (the way good writers do it), from psychological studies of creativity, and from the traditions of rhetoric and composition teaching. We have used these heuristics to teach writing not only in composition courses, but as a condensed unit in problem-solving courses and management courses, and in workshops for teachers....

In formulating our strategy in this two-part way, we have made a fundamental assumption about the composing process: namely, that it can often be divided into two complementary but semi-autonomous processes, which we designate as generating versus constructing on one level and playing versus pushing on another. This division in our model reflects one of the essential dichotomies that pervades the literature on creativity and imagination. In their various ways, artists, critics, and psychologists have long recognized a distinction between what we might call inspiration and work; between romanticism's principle of organic unity and neoclassicism's equal veneration of conscious craft; between the nature-given "grace beyond the reach of art" and the man-made art of the commonplace "n'er so well expressed." Over time the prestige and precise definition of each mode varies, but together they represent two stable, complementary dimensions of the creative process. Although experienced writers fluidly switch from one mode of thinking to the other as they write, there are important practical and psychological reasons for writers to be conscious about this distinction and to recognize the multiple cognitive styles writing requires.

The following heuristics, developed primarily for analytical writers, draw in part on established methods (such as brainstorming and synectics); others are our attempt to embody, in a teachable technique, some of the underlying problem-solving strategies good writers use. This shorthand version of the Heuristic Strategy was written for students with a limited to non-existent background in writing, but an interest in treating it as a problem they could solve.

*Part One: Planning*

Plan
1. Set Up a Goal

Planning toward a goal is one of the most powerful of all problem-solving techniques because it lets you factor large problems down to manageable size.[32] When you write a paper, you are choosing among an immense number of possible things you could say, all of which could be potentially "correct." You can streamline this decision process by shifting from focusing on your topic (what you know) to focusing on your goal (what you want to do with what you know).

In practical terms this means that you start to write by trying to answer the blunt question readers always ask—"so what?" Why is this particular information being written down, why should anyone else read it, and what do you hope to accomplish by writing it?...

### 2. Find Operators

As you make your plans, keep in mind that some plans have what are called "operators"; that is, they have built-in directions which tell you how to go about reaching your goal. Compare these two plans, one with operators, one without: (1) I want to be rich and famous, vs. (2) I want to study probability, statistics, and problem solving so I can get rich quick at Las Vegas and become famous writing a bestseller on how I did it. For a writer a plan with operators might be, "I want to forcefully argue both sides of this controversy to show the reader that I have pinpointed the crucial issues, but also to pave the way for my own ideas."

## *Part Two: Generating Ideas In Words*

These techniques increase your creativity by helping you (1) to break set and get out of conventional patterns of thinking (2) to foster those important elusive intuition which might otherwise be censored or slip away, and (3) to discover among your own ideas important connections you may not have seen. However, the real problem you are working on here is not just getting ideas, but *verbalizing* them. Your goal is to get your thinking down in words, phrases, sentences—fragments of writing. Until you can express what's in you mind in words, it can be said you don't really know it yet. These techniques will help you follow out your ideas and turn them into language.

### Play Your Thoughts

### 1. Turn off the Editor and Brainstorm

Once you have a sense of your goal and the problem before you, brainstorming is a good way to jump in. Brainstorming is a form of creative, *goal-directed play.* It has two rules: keep writing and don't try to censor or perfect as you go.

Start in the middle, at the end, or with any issue that's on your mind; start any place you want, but get started writing. Don't censor ideas—write them down. When you come up with an idea or expression that isn't quite "right," resist the temptation to throw it out and start again. Instead, write it down so you can tease out the good idea or intuition that was hidden inside it. If you don't see how it all fits together now, don't worry; just get your ideas in words....

Secondly, don't spend time polishing your prose or making it "flow." Because you are not trying to turn out a finished paper in one pass, you don't need to worry about following an outline or writing introductions and transitions. (In fact, isn't it unreasonable to try to write those *before* you've actually articulated the ideas you want to connect or introduce?)

Brainstorming is like "free writing" in that it encourages you to follow where intuition leads. But it has one important difference: free writing is a form of free association, stream of consciousness expression—one idea leads to another which leads to another, like links in a chain. Brainstorming, on the other hand, is goal-directed thinking. Although your thought is encouraged to go off on fresh and productive tangents, it is always returning, like spokes in a wheel, to focus on the problem at hand.

2. Stage a Scenario

People often come up with their best ideas and most powerful arguments when they are caught up in a live discussion. You can give yourself this same advantage by staging your own discussion. All of us have considerable powers of role playing which will let us take on not only certain familiar roles (such as the mature and responsible person we try to project as a job interview) but will also let us play the part of another person. That is, we can also switch parts, take on the attitudes and assumptions of the interviewer, and play that role when we want to.

You can use this ability to help generate better ideas in words by simulating the response of various readers or listeners: make them ask you questions (basic questions and difficult ones), raise objections, or make their own interpretations. For example, imagine what would be your reader's first response, and what would you say back to him? To get extra power out of this technique, give yourself different audiences with distinct expectations: a professor or supervisor listening critically to your logic, an employer looking to see what you can do, an audience of other experts at your lecture, or a friend trying to understand your main idea over a beer.

3. Play Out An Analogy

Whether we are conscious of it or not, much of our creative thinking is done by using analogies. When we see a partial resemblance between two things (going through high school is like serving time), we acquire a whole new set of concepts to think with.

In using analogies, you have to both encourage and harness their tendency to overflowing, undirected productivity. Suppose, for example, you are analyzing the operation of a university. It occurs to you that universities have much in common with big businesses. The *potential* connections between the two are numerous: the analogy could suggest that both need professional management, or that both would benefit from healthy competition, or perhaps that both turn out a product but seem to spend most of their advertising budget marketing a self-image, etc. To tap this potential you could simply brainstorm all the possibilities your analogy will yield, though many will be spurious. Or you could take your intuition seriously and try to discover the hidden connection, implicit in your thinking, which initially suggested the analogy. By making the connection explicit, you can also decide if it is valid. You thought of big business in this context for a reason; why? what was the hook for your?

There are a number of other generating techniques which tap the power of analogic thinking.[33] The most elaborate and formal one is synectics, in which you systematically explore four kinds of analogies: Personal, Symbolic, Direct, and Fantasy analogies. The most obvious technique is simply to apply the operator "like" to your idea: "Running a university is like..." If these two techniques seem a little formal or artificial you can take advantage of analogic thinking in a more common way: simply change your vocabulary.

One powerful way to broaden your idea base is to talk about your subject from a different perspective, using a different vocabulary. As a systems engineer you might analyze university life in terms of work flow and productivity. But if that perspective (and its language) only tells half the story, you could try the outlook and special language of a consumer: are a QPA and diploma devalued commodities offered at inflated prices? Or are they the real products a university offers? The goal is to change your idea set: the most natural way to do that is to change roles or vocabularly.

4. Rest and Incubate

This can be an important part of the creative process if you do it well. When you need to stop work, do so only after you have formulated the next unsolved problem before you. Let your unfinished business simmer *actively* in back of your mind and return to it from time to time. The corollary to using incubation well is that you are prepared, whenever a new idea or connection comes to you, to write it down. Don't expect inspiration to knock twice. The language you lose may be a loaded term that will only reveal its full possibilities later when you push it.

Push Your Ideas

1. Find a Cue Word or Rich Bit

Your own private cut words, if you can mine them, are a source of original ideas. Often in the process of brainstorming a writer will find that a single word, expression, or idea seems particularly important or that it keeps returning to her/his mind. For example, when people try to analyze their own writing process, many say that getting things to "flow" is a key concept for them, although they can't say exactly what that means. The expression "flow" is apparently functioning for them as a cue word, or what psycholinguists call a "rich bit": it stands as the center of a network of ideas and associations which are unique to the writer. By a kind of mental shorthand, that single expression brings together a whole body of ideas and experiences which are related in the persons's thoughts.

2. Nutshell Your Ideas and Teach Them

Find a listener/fellow-student/long-suffering friend to whom you can condense and explain the essentials of your thinking. In two or three sentences—in a nutshell—lay out the whole substance of your paper. Nutshelling practically forces you to make the relationship between your major ideas explicit. (In doing so you generate an issue tree which will be more useful to you than an ordinary outline.) Nutshells put noisy supporting information in its place and help you focus on the essentials of what you have to say.

Teaching also helps focus ideas because it taps our intuitive strategies for dealing with an audience. Like nutshelling, it forces you to conceptualize your information and make sure your listener gets the *point*, not just the data. When a writer begins to feel agog with an accumulation of ideas and information, teaching in a nutshell can help generate the new concepts and categories that can put all those ideas in order.

3. Tree Your Ideas

Most of the generation techniques described so far require you to think and write without the crutch or the straightjacket of a tidy outline. However, one of your major goals is to produce a paper with a clear and tight structure. Experienced writers resolve this apparent dilemma in the following way: they try to *pull* an outline *out* of the material they generate, rather than write to fill an outline in. Building an issue tree is a technique for structuring your ideas *after* you've begun to generate. It has two major advantages over starting with an outline: (1) It offers a more graphic representation of how ideas are related; (2) it shows you what you haven't yet said and where you need to do more thinking. A simple issue tree starts by trying to put the fragments of brainstorming into a hierarchical order.

### 4. Test Your Writing Against Your Own Editor

Try reading what you have written as if you were a first-time reader by going straight through your draft and locating any places that leave you somewhat confused. The sharpest analyst is the one who can pinpoint what he doesn't yet know or where he needs to go to work.

There are two techniques which will help you play the role of an objective reader who sees only what is written—not what you *meant* to say. The first is to read your prose carefully, word for word, as if you had never seen it before, and let its logic, syntax, and vocabulary lead you where they actually go. An even more powerful technique, if you can find a place to do it, is to read your own writing out loud. Don't whisper or you'll just be talking to yourself again. Read it in a good firm voice and listen to find out what you actually said. Better yet, create a scenario by positing your audience sitting there listening to you.

## *Part Three: Constructing For An Audience*

A first draft often satisfies a writer; it seems to say just what s/he means. But when s/he comes back a day, a week, or a year later, many of the supporting assumptions and loaded meanings she brought to the first reading have vanished. The gaps, which s/he once filled in unconsciously, now stand out in the writing and demand explanation. In essence, what these heuristics ask you to do is perform a means/ends analysis on your own writing. That is, they ask you to decide what *ends* you hope to achieve by writing and then to consider some of the specific *means* that might help you do it.

### Ends

What, exactly, are you trying to achieve in this paper or this paragraph, and what effect do you intend to have on your reader? Working from even a simple plan with operators lets you break out of the haphazard momentum writing sometimes imposes ("I'll just write a version and see how it turns out") and work as a goal directed problem-solver.

### 1. Identify a Mutual End You and the Reader Share

This is the "so what" question again, with the emphasis on your reader this time. What common goal do the two of you share? The desire to know your opinions on a subject is rarely enough to motivate most readers. Presuppose a reader with six papers on her/his desk and the time to read one. This statement, which you may even use later in your introduction, says why yours is the one s/he wants to read now.

### 2. Decide on Your Own Specific Ends

a. What do you want the reader to *know* at the end of your paper?

b. What do you want your reader to think about that information?

c. What do you want your reader to *do?* Given what your reader will know and possibly think at the end of your paper, do you want him/her to apply it, and if so, how? Tell him/her.

Roadblocks

Once you have planned what you want your writing to accomplish, consider possible roadblocks.

Means

1. Develop a Rhetorical Strategy

Developing a rhetorical strategy necessarily involves a wide range of skills and methods, from the sophisticated ones of Aristotle to simplistic formulas for packing three examples beneath every point. Rather than review some of these familiar methods we will focus here on a new heuristic based on the cognitive needs of the reader. The goal of this heuristic is to transform Writer-Based prose and its typical structures into Reader-Based prose. This rhetorical strategy is designed to help the reader comprehend more of what the writer has to say.

*Writer-Based Prose.* Writing is inevitably a somewhat egocentric enterprise. It is always easiest to talk to ourselves, and we naturally tend to express ideas in the same patterns in which we store them in our own mind. But if our goal is to communicate to someone else, those patterns in our own head may not be particularly clear or effective for a reader.

Writer-Based prose is often the natural result of generating ideas; it borrows its structure from either the writer's own discovery process or from a structure inherent in the material the writer examined.

Both of these examples of Writer-Based prose have advantages—for the writer. They are an easy and natural way to express one's thought. Furthermore, it is often most efficient to generate ideas in this form. The point is that in constructing a paper, a writer must recognize his/her own use of code words and writer-based structures and try to transform them to meet the needs of his/her reader.

*Reader-Based Prose.* There are many ways to write with a reader in mind. We will offer two heuristics well suited for analytical papers. The first is to set up a paper around the problem it is intended to solve and the conclusion you intend to argue for. Papers organized around problems not only focus a reader's attention, they help the writer subordinate his information to his goals and draw conclusions.

A second technique is to organize ideas in a clear hierarchy or tree. In composing, writers often work from the bottom of a tree up to more inclusive concepts. But readers understand best when they have an overview, when they can see an idea structure from the top down. 34

2. Test Your Rhetorical Strategy

If you are lucky, you can test the effectiveness of your rhetorical structure on a live reader. Ask someone else to read your writing and to tell you in their own words what they thought you were saying. Use this feedback to compare what you intended with what you actually communicated.

*Linda S. Flower and John R. Hays,*
*Carnegie-Melon University*
*"Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process"*

The word *revision* outside the writing classroom suggests a process of change, one of re-seeing and re-conceptualizing. However, in the writing classroom, revision is seen as a non-creative act, a polishing act, concerned with taking the lard out or the dead-wood out of sentences. Revision, in the writing class, is an interesting as an autopsy.

This is so, I suspect, because in the pre-dominant model of writing-the pre-writing, writing, rewriting model-we have identified pre-writing as the creative stage of the composing process. We have reasoned that our students' compositions lack thought, therefore, we need to direct our exercises to the thinking stage of the process: pre-writing. The rewriting stage becomes redundant; rewriting is simply the repetition of writing-it begins with a pre-conceived product. Rewriting is something to be suffered through.

But as Kenneth Burke has remarked, "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." What we have not seen about the composing process is that although the linear model might provide a pedagogical convenience by breaking a complex process into a series of discrete temporal stages, it is not an *accurate* model of how any writer composes. In our haste to discuss the composing process, not the product, we have not developed the necessary vocabulary. Rather, we have attempted to fit our interpretation of the composing process to an inadequate vocabulary.

Current research on the composing process suggests that a writer is simultaneously forced into a multiplicity of roles—reader, discoverer, critic, as the ideas are selected, evaluated, and organized. Since we can not tell where one "stage" of the composing process begins or ends, a more accurate picture of the composing process is a recursive one. For instance, the recursive model proposed by Linda Flower characterizes the composing process by significant recurring activities. Revision occurs continually during the writing of a work; revision is the process of making the work congruent with the writer's intentions....

If we can teach our students the logic of a paragraph, then we can have the confidence to allow them to discover their own structure to match the meaning of what they have to say. Every student has something to say, but not every student knows how to say whatever she or he has to say in a rigid five paragraph essay complete with topic sentences. What we have not realized is that the structure of an essay is a very sophisticated form of discourse and that there are numerous forms of writing to teach our students besides the formulaic essay.

We also learn from experienced writers that all first drafts are deeply flawed by the need to combine composition and thought, but that each later draft is less demanding in this regard. Since writers are limited by what they can attend to they need to develop revision strategies to help balance competing demands on attention. Thus, writers can concentrate on more than one objective at a time by developing strategies to subordinate their range of revision concerns.

The problem in teaching writing is that writing is never abstract and rules always are. What is needed is a series of procedures formulated in relation to their own goals that would give students a more specific sense of the purpose of their writing and the means to achieve (and modify) that purpose. The rules we are offered now—and the necessary attention to detail they force us, as teachers, to take—are so abstract that they are often mistaken for ends in themselves. The rules that we teach in composition classes at once foster the assumption that writing and communicated thought are indistinguishable and the assumption that this writing (communicated thought) is completely separate from the procedures of revision, which simply correct local mistakes, add "style," and seek to find other words. What they encourage is the constant though necessary danger of rules as such: the confusion of ends and means.

*Nancy Sommers*
*University of Oklahoma*
*"Intentions & Revisions: The Structure*
*of the Revision Process"*

The first commandment of revision is *See Me*. This is not an ominous imperative warning of some unspeakable crime, but the simple request that our students see us for what we are. Sometimes we are the biggest obstacle to their accurate vision, but we know we are neither supreme authorities nor liberating saviors. We are merely writers who are trying to help others improve their writing. As evidence of our good faith, we should write with our students—at the same time and under the same conditions—so that they may see how we are humiliated and humanized by our own writing assignments. We should show them not only our completed efforts but also our sketchy outlines, ragged false starts, and tedious revisions so that *they know we feel what they feel*—frustration, futility, and fatigue. In this way, our students will be able to enter the revision process without illusions. They will no longer suspect us of withholding some divine wisdom which, if they had it, would surely save them. Revision will never bring salvation, but the selection of this word over that word, or this phrasing over that phrasing, can inch each essay toward modest reformation.

The second commandment is to *See the Student*. If we look again at *who we really were* as students, then we will have little difficulty seeing our students for who they are. Given this sympathetic perception, we know how little we can assume about their abilities, how carefully we will have to explain each decision in the revising process, and how often we will have to repeat each explanation. But this second commandment also requires seeing our students as they would like to be seen. That is, as we begin the revising process, we should convey our high regard for what our students have attempted to write. This is not gratuitous flattery. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the enormous distance that always separates visionary conception and disappointing expression. To help our students revise their themes, we must be able to re-envision their original inspiration. Thus, our high *regard* for our students' essays is actually seeing what they saw, seeing how difficult it was for them to express what they saw, and seeing how difficult it will be for us and them to revise their essays to more nearly express that vision.

The final commandment is to *See Writing as a Continuing Process*. Unfortunately, our teaching often encourages us to see writing as a very limited process. Once the outline has been drafted and the theme has been copied over, the process seems virtually complete. The theme will be inspected, repaired, and discarded in favor of the new model. As teachers of writing, however, our tasks are to improve each product by prolonging the process of its creation and to encourage ourselves and our students to see this extension, this series of second choices, as exhilarating rather than exasperating. To illustrate this point, I will conclude these remarks by exchanging my fantasy from Kafka for a fable from Camus:

"The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of the mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor....

One sees the whole effort of a body straining to raise the hugh stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the claycovered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.

It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself. I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he braves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock....

The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."[35]

*Joseph Trimmer*
*Ball State University*
*"Look Again and Then See Me'*

It seems to me that a methodology based upon the nature of the writing process itself is the most serviceable one at every level—although such an approach will concentrate more upon certain aspects of that process than upon others at differing levels of writing instruction. Such a curicculum gives instruction in invention, in the focusing and developing of ideas for an audience, and in the language competency that supports discursive effectiveness. The basic writing course may concentrate upon language competency and the advanced course upon discourse, but the entire process should be the model taught at every level. The most skilled professional writer goes through the same process as does the basic writer; what differs is the level of sophistication and complexity with which the process is engaged in—and the degree of control that the writer has over it. The most difficult methodology to teach is that of the beginning level, for it involves breaking an extremely complex process down into its simplest and most fundamental components.

With basic writers, we have found that lots of sentence patterning and paragraph patterning are effective in conjunction with a sequence that builds syntactic competency increment by increment and that also teaches the generation and development of ideas—again, using lots of patterned practice to do so. At more advanced levels, one can rely less upon patterns and models and more upon the writer's own generating of structures.

I also find, with basic writers, that it is advisable to intervene at every stage of the writing process rather than waiting until a piece is handed in as "finished." Peer-group critiquing is invaluable in the teaching of writing, both because it gives students a real audience for which to write and because it helps them to develop their own critical faculties; this methodology is effective at every level of the teaching of writing. At the basic writing level, the instructor must give students carefully thought out instructions for engaging in the critiquing process; otherwise it simply becomes a pooling of ignorances. I have also found the use of tape cassettes and taped critiques of students' papers to be extremely useful as a teaching tool.

*Janice Hays*
*Skidmore College*
*Letter to Networks*

A current debate over strategy—whether or not to separate the teaching of grammar from the teaching of composing is presented here by several writers. Marie Lederman asserts that the two activities are inseparable and Mary Epes, Michael Southwell, and Carolyn Kirkpatrick separate the two operations, teaching them in different ways and settings. Both provide a description of the exercises that have proved useful to their methods. Focusing on grammar mistakes specifically, Laraine Fergenson proposes a new theory of error correction containing a useful technique for overcoming some of the more glaring grammatical mistakes of students.

* * *

Like all teachers of writing, I have strong biases about the teaching of grammar. Bias number one: I teach grammar. Bias number two: I believe that the notion that students must somehow "learn grammar" before they begin writing is false; therefore, students in all my writing classes, remedial and non-remedial, write essays all term. Bias number three: I do not use grammar texts. Grammar texts are de-codable primarily by those who already know how to speak and write Standard English. They confuse "trick" questions on minor points of grammar with those real mistakes that our students do make, obliterating the line between what is very important in Standard Written English and what is less important.

I teach not only "grammar" but every aspect of writing from students writing. This makes my teaching of grammar an integral part of my teaching of writing. I make a conscious effort not to separate the teaching of grammar from the rest of what goes on in my writing classes, either by using special texts for it or by devoting special units during the term to it, or separate periods during the week. The teaching of grammar and the teaching of good writing are not seperable activities, and using separate time periods and separate texts to "teach grammar" helps reinforce the notion, already firmly planted in our students' heads, that they *are* separable.

What I am describing is simply an alternative way to dealing with grammar in our students' writing—a way of teaching grammar without using grammar texts. Let me be specific. I am going to discuss the use of this method with one of my remedial writing classes at City University of New York.

My first assignment was an in-class essay on any topic. After I had read these papers at home, I sat down at my typewriter and picked out sentences which contained miscellaneous errors in Standard English. I made an effort to get sentences from each of my students' papers and to get at least one kind of error which they, as a class, were making. I typed the sentences exactly as they appeared in the students' papers, except for spelling errors; I try not to reinforce incorrect spelling by copying misspelled words on these tear sheets.

When we met for the next class I returned the papers and distributed this sheet. I asked the students to take the sheet home and try to make corrections on any sentences which they thought were incorrect. If they couldn't see the error, of course they would leave the sentence alone. In addition to this assignment, I gave them their next writing assignment. We had read a New York Times article dealing with the sudden advent of three television shows which had heroes/heroines who were both ethnic and single. Their assignment was to watch one of these three programs and to write an essay discussing the reality or unreality of the program as each of them perceived it.

The next time we met we went over the first tear sheet containing sentences with errors from their first writing assignment. This allowed me to begin to get some idea of what kinds of errors my students were capable of picking up and correcting and what kinds of errors confused them. This gave me my direction for future teaching. I collected the essay on the reality or unreality of the television program. In addition to making comments on each paper, I decided to pick out two kinds of sentences for use in class: run-on sentences and sentences which contained subject-verb agreement errors.

I don't grade the tear sheets because, ultimately, I'm not interested in whether or not students can make corrections on isolated pieces of paper. The real feedback comes from their essays. When a student who has been making a certain kind of error stops making that error, I have my feedback. If the student continues to make the error, I know that I need to work with the student individually in conference. After the conference, my assignment to the student is to go home and write a paragraph including some sentences which illustrate that the student has understood what we have just done.

*Marie Lederman*
*Resource Center of the City University*
*"Usage and Abusage: Teaching Grammar*
*without textbooks"*

Our curriculum research has been supported by a two-year grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, under which we have developed a model basic writing course.

In developing the model course, we've had to grapple with these two different needs: composing (or instruction in content) and editing (or instruction in correctness-that is, in the grammar of standard written English). Our solution has been to differentiate carefully between the two, giving them equal emphasis, but teaching them in entirely different ways, and in entirely different settings. For a student at this level, writing papers must be a two-step process: the student first composes a paper, and only then edits it for correctness. Otherwise, the two processes tend to derail one another.

The first of these skills, composing, we teach in a traditional classroom setting; the second, editing, is developed in an autotutorial laboratory. While we do spend a great deal of time in the course on the composing process, most of our research has been on students' problems with the basic forms of standard written English.

Behind our work, and that of others in this area, lie some very basic assumptions, most persuasively formulated by Mina Shaughnessy in *Errors and Expectations:* The first is that *error is not trivial.* The second is that *error can be explained.* The third is that *what can be explained, can be taught.*

Since correctness for basic writing students is essentially mastery of an unfamiliar language system, teaching at the basic writing level has at least as much in common with English-as-a-Second-Language teaching as it does with teaching traditional composition. And yet basic writing students have far greater difficulties in learning the grapholect, or written dialect, than most students would have in learning a second language. Because their speech is perfectly efficient as a means of oral communication, basic writing students can't even perceive the grammatical differences between their speech and standard English. They've heard and read standard English all their lives, in school and on TV, but it would seem that a kind of simultaneous translation takes place. Basic writing students frequently aren't even sure whether they *have* put an *-s* ending on a word, let alone whether they *should* have.

Despite these problems, if error can be explained, it can be overcome. Most grammar instruction is based on cognition: students are drilled in analyzing sentences and must master a fairly complicated terminology. This is quite ineffective for second-dialect learning. Not only does study after study show that such activity has little effect on writing, but nontraditional students are likely to have relatively undeveloped analytical skills. On the other hand, an inductive approach works well; in order to change ingrained language habits when they write (or to be more accurate, when they edit their writing for correctness), students need *practice* in using standard grammatical forms.

Materials to provide students with this practice must meet three criteria: (1) They must be based on students' actual writing; they should deal with students' most common and pervasive errors. (2) Materials must be based on careful analysis of these errors. For example, students' problems with word forms and syntax are interdependent. On the one hand, students must understand the functions and forms of basic word classes, like nouns and verbs, before they can understand, analyze, correct, or even *use* certain syntactic structures. Conversely, unless they understand syntactic structures, like adjective clauses, they cannot inflect the verb forms which occur in such structures. (3) Materials for basic writing should be directed toward systematic, not occasional, features. Relatively unimportant errors like *who* for *whom* or omission or misuse of quotation marks should probably not even be mentioned until a later course.

At this point, we'd like to illustrate some of the principles we've been discussing, with some samples of the approximately 250 exercises we've developed for the course.

1. This exercise gives students practice in writing sentences, changing verbs into the simple past tense and using them in a series.

> INSTRUCTIONS: For each group of sentences below, do this: (1) Answer them in one affirmative (yes) sentence. Do not use the word *did* in your answer. (2) In each rewritten sentence, (a) underline the verbs, and (b) draw a slash between the subject part and the verb part. Follow this model:
>
> Did the babies eat? Did they sleep? Did they cry?
> Yes, they ate, slept, and cried.
>
> 1. Did Caesar dance? Did he sing? Did he perform magic tricks?
>
> 2. Did the phone ring? Did it stop? Did it begin to ring again?
>
> 3. Did Shirley break her arm? Did she quit the team?

2. This exercise is a controlled composition, used in a unit on the verb BE. Students are asked to rewrite the entire paragraph, changing nouns and pronouns into the singular—which necessitates changes in past-tense forms of BE.

> INSTRUCTIONS: Rewrite the following paragraph in the space below, changing each underlined word to its singular form, and making whatever other changes are necessary. Underline every change you make. The first sentence will begin like this: "When I was..."
>
> When we were young bank tellers, counterfeit bills were hard for us to detect. But there were older tellers in the bank whose index fingers were as sensitive as lie detectors. And to their sharp eyes, presidential faces on large bills were as familiar as their own. Presidents with crooked noses or bent ears were as obvious to them as the false smiles on the faces of thieves.

3. This exercise is also a controlled composition. As in many of our exercises, base form verbs appear in capital letters, and students must change them appropriately as they rewrite the paragraph. Here, they are asked to rewrite the paragraph in the past tense, and to do this they must recognize finite verbs and change them into the correct past-tense forms; and in this particular exercise, they must also recognize the infinitive forms which do not change. Inflected verbs are thus contrasted with infinitives, which helps students to avoid hypercorrection of infinitives, like *if the wife failed to delivered.*

Remember: (1) Past-tense forms of the verb BE—was and were—agree with their subject.
(2) For all other verbs, use the appropriate irregular or regular past-tense form.
(3) To + the base form of a verb is an infinitive. An infinitive is not a verb; it never changes in form.

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INSTRUCTIONS: The following paragraph is written in the past tense. Verbs appear in their base form, in capital letters. Rewrite the paragraph in the space below, changing each verb to the appropriate form. Underline every change you make. The first sentence will begin like this: "In the Middle Ages, marriage customs *were*..."

In the Middle Ages, marriage customs BE strange and cruel, especially for women. While the brides BE still in their cradles, their parents USE to SET the wedding date. Sometimes a girl never SEE her husband until the MEET at the alter rail, and all too often this meeting TURN out to BE quite a shock. But no matter how she FEEL about him, the marriage contract MAKE it clear that he HAVE to HAVE an heir. If the wife FAIL to DELIVER a child within a year or two, her husband often USE to GET an annulment, and then he MARRY someone else. The man BE free to TAKE a mistress, but if his wife TAKE a look at another man, he BEAT her. Some women THINK it BE better not to MARRY at all, and CHOOSE to ENTER the convent instead.

4. This is another exercise employing the principle of contrast, used in a late unit on noun possessives. To help students avoid confusion with previous learning, they are asked to distinguish among many different *-s* endings: noun *-s* endings (marked with a circle), present-tense verb *-s* endings (marked with a triangle), and contracted *-s'* endings (marked with a diamond).

INSTRUCTIONS: In the paragraph below, do these things:

(1) Put a circle around all *-s* or *-es* endings which make nouns plural.
(2) Put a box around all *-s* or *-es* ending which make verbs agree with their subjects.
(3) Put a triangle around all -'s or *-s'* endings which make nouns possessive.
(4) Put a diamond around all *-'s* endings which are contractions of *is* or *has*.
*(5)* Do not mark any words that end in *-s* which is part of their spelling (for example, *kiss)*.

The first four examples have been marked for you.

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Jack's always enjoyed reading people's horoscopes because he finds out what their characters are like. According to the books he's been studying recently, a Capricorn dislikes changes and always wants things to stay the same. An

Aquarian's delight seems to be to shock others. Persons born under the sign of Pisces will spend a week's salary on novelties and waste a summer's afternoon in daydreaming. An Arian's sign looks like a ram, and he often acts like one, too. A Taurean loves the body's pleasures, like bubble baths, a bed's downy coverings, and fancy meals. Jack notes that among a Gemini's bad habits are coming late, telling lies, and playing practical jokes. A Cancer expresses emotions in an intense way, with cries like a baby's and laughs like a madman's. Leos carry themselves like kings and sincerely believe that the world's admiration belongs to them by right. Virgos always want to serve all humanity's needs; they are studious and make good secretaries. A Libra's interests center on books, flowers, and quiet places. Scorpios make good spies. A Sagittarian's always optimistic, but sometimes hurts others by being too blunt. After reading about the characteristic qualities of people born under the various signs of the Zodiac, Jack's sure that if he knows when a friend's birthdate occurs, then that person's action will never surprise him.

5. Finally, proofreading exercises like this one give students practice in editing for correctness. This is a cumulative exercise at the end of work on past-tense verb forms, which also requires students to recall work from four previous units. They must be able to identify correct forms in context, and to identify incorrect and hypercorrect forms that need to be changed. Exercises like this one give students practice in the kind of editing they must learn to apply to their own papers.

> INSTRUCTIONS: The following paragraph contains errors of all the kinds you have already learned to correct. Underline each error, and correct it in the space above the line. The first error has been corrected for you.

are

There is two kinds of foreign beetles which zoom across America. One, a unpopular insect from Japan, multiply every year; but the other, an auto from West Germany, are rapidly vanishing. If your a Volkswagen beetle owner, you probably thinks your car is immortal, but beetles is a threatened species: the last beetle come off the assembly line in 1976. In the early sixty, when beetles first arrive here, they was not much more popular with Americans then the Japanese variety. In those days, people want there cars big an dramatic, and they ignore how much gasthey use. But as more and more of those queer little auto edge their way onto the highways among the Cadillac and Oldsmobiles, they gradually winned the hearts of American drivers. VW owners loved their cars because they costed so little to operated, and they was so easy to maneuver in the city. Some of those early beetle-lover become so enthusiastic that they say Volkswagens flew, swum, and jump, while other cars only runned. One of these fanatic kepted his car for ten years, drive it for 150,000 miles, and then refuse to sell it for junks; instead he buy a new motor and resetted his odometer at zero. Now the Smithsonian Institute have plans to display a old beetle next too a Model T Ford.

Here are a few broader implications of what we've been saying:

First, for nontraditional students, editing should be taught as a separate skill from composing. It follows that fair writing assessment examinations for these students *must* allow time for editing, if correctness is any part of the evaluation—and it always is.

Second, for these students, error in standard written English is *not* a matter of "mere surface features." The interdependence of word forms and syntax must be recognized if we are to deal with students' writing problems.

Finally, and most important, we believe that work on word-form correctness increases students' fluency and rhetorical development, as well. As students feel themselves gaining control over the medium of expression, they feel freer to express themselves, and most students prove to have worthwhile things to say. They stop using the avoidance tactics of oversimplified sentences and constructions that inadequately represent the complexity of their ideas. After a semester's intensive work on correctness, students show greatly improved attitudes toward writing.

*Mary Epes, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Michael Southwell*
*York College, CUNY*
*"Investigating Error in the Writing of*
*Nontraditional College Students"*

Since the needs of basic writing students often appear overwhelming, the problem is how to teach so many severely underprepared students effectively, how to give individual help to all of our students with their many different writing problems. For several members of the English Department at Bronx Community College, one invention mothered by our necessity is the double-correction method. 36

In a section where this method is employed, when a student receives a corrected paper, s/he rewrites two times each sentence that contains an error. The student first rewrites the sentence exactly as it originally appeared in the paper and then picks up a green-ink pen and corrects the error(s) in green just as the instructor has done in red. (Yes, we do correct in red ink because it is important for a student to see all the corrections s/he should copy over; when the student uses green ink to correct his or her own sentence, again the contrasting color reinforces the correction.) Then the student rewrites the sentence correctly using blue or black ink. In the second version the correction is completely incorporated.

It is important that the rewriting of sentences be presented in a positive way. It should never be considered a punishment for making errors, but rather a chance to practice what needs practice. It is, in effect, individualized homework, as the students can easily understand.

In fact, doing double-corrections can go a long way toward helping a basic writing student deal with the helpless feeling created by seeing so many errors noted on his or her essays. When a basic writing student receives a paper that has been corrected in the standard way, s/he may be understandably frustrated.

To spare our students' feelings, some instructors have suggested that not everything be marked. To some extent, all writing instructors follow this practice, since there is always something else we could note, but don't, about the organization of a certain paragraph, about the way to improve sentence structure, about the choice of words, and so forth. But with the huge number of fundamental errors that a basic writing student is likely to make in sentence structure, verb form, and spelling, even a well-meaning instructor's humane selectivity will not cure the bloody-paper syndrome, and since a student will probably assume a sentence is "all right" if it contains no corrections, it seems less than honest not to note all the basic errors that the student has made.

Some instructors may object to the double-correction method on the grounds that when students copy over their original sentences exactly as they were, they may be reinforcing errors. For two reasons, this objection does not seem to be valid. First, the student who rewrites an error is immediately changing that error to the correct form. Second, the reinforcement-of-error objection might hold if the students were, in fact, making random errors, but, as Mina Shaughnessy pointed out in *Errors and Expectations*,[37] many student errors are not random at all, but follow the patterns of nonstandard speech. Consider the case of the student who writes "My problems was just beginning," and immediately changes the nonstandard "was" to the standard "were." This student is not reinforcing error by writing "was" in the first sentence, but recreating in a conscious way his or her own nonstandard speech. When students use the double-correction method regularly, they become aware not only of the standard grammar that they need to learn, but also of the patterns of their own speech and writing that may interfere with the writing of the standard grammatical forms.

*Laraine Fergenson*
*Bronx Community College*
*"The Double-Correction Method"*

# V MATERIALS USED IN WRITING COURSES

Teachable strategies entail assignments that have clear goals and stimulate the thinking process. In some cases, as with Elizabeth Auleta's Consciousness—raising assignment, time is devoted to activities that permit students to investigate their own language environments previous to a written assignment. In assignments made by Yakira Frank, students are asked to record perceptions of their physical environment in preparation for critical re-examination of that immediate world in writing. Other assignment examples include: creating an essay from a snapshot using a particular format and writing an assessment essay on a topic developed by the English Composition Board at the University of Michigan.

The last section presents samples from several writing programs. A detailed prospectus prepared by Elaine Maimon from Beaver College delineates the texts, objectives, and requirements for Freshman English. Janice Hays of Skidmore College supplies an example of the Curriculum Contents for English 103, a brief discussion of the course components for Basic Writing Skills, and an elaboration of one component of the program, the journal. In conclusion, Barbara Dougherty discusses the special advantages and aims of the Writing Workshop at the University of Michigan.

* * *

I have found it useful to devote two or three classes at the beginning of the course to discussions of language habits and where they come from. Activities or discussions which allow students to describe and analyze their own language environments (home, community, culture, school setting, even TV) help them to look at language as the way we express who we are. During these discussions the class *may* end up discussing the following:

1. Standard English as the language of the powerful.
2. Standard written English—language of the educated (i.e., the powerful, the smart)
3. Fears that some students might have about adopting standard English and losing the ability to relate to their families and friends from home. Discuss bilingualism, "bi-dialectism".
4. The beauty and richness of the many dialects, language habits, phrases and accents that make up American English.
5. Ways that writing was either encouraged or discouraged by their school environments.

Note: Teacher should not decide which points will be discussed. Consciousness-raising implies that the group decides what gets discussed.

*"Consciousness-raising"*
*Elizabeth Auleta*
*SUNY/Oswego*

The assignments and exercises which I used dealt at first with the students' immediate environment and stressed concrete details; from that point the student was taken by stages to more abstract topics, which he also developed through concrete details and experiences.

The exercises evolved after an interesting experience that I'd had as a consultant for Language Arts to an elementary school. I was working on ranking details in composition with my freshman students and with the teachers of the elementary school pupils. The assignments dealt with descriptions of interiors and exteriors; and I discovered that many students had ceased to examine evidence or look closely at the subject at hand. Or else they were "giving the teacher what they thought she wanted." Usually that meant inflated language and "pretty pictures," which were unreal and insipid. In an assignment I had suggested to a fifth grade teacher that students were to describe a walk in the woods. One student wrote: "Tall grasses grew in the deep forest. Roses, geraniums and tulips grew around the little pool. Suddenly a deer appeared. A parrot swooped and circled around his antlers..." I tried a similar assignment with college freshmen, and one student wrote: "Tall grasses brushed against me. Wild roses gave forth a strong, sweet scent. Through the tree tops I could see fluffy, white clouds." I was amazed to find such similar cliches in the writing of a fifth grader and a college student.

From that time I insisted on journal assignments in which the students were to record meticulously their perceptions of the environment. They were to describe the smells in the woods behind the school, the feel of the bark on the trees, the kinds of undergrowth, the sounds they heard as they walked, the moss on the rocks, the coils of roots protruding on the ground, the dead, lightning-blasted tree trunks, etc. In short, I was demanding that the students re-examine their environments closely; and in this way I believe that they had honestly begun re-educating themselves, dealing critically with their immediate world.

After the initial assignments dealing with the students' surroundings I developed others which dealt with their education (yet still incorporating material drawn from their immediate environment). They turned to their past and reviewed a variety of learning experiences, from formal classroom learning, such as they had when they were first graders learning to add, to informal experiences, such as learning to put their galoshes on in kindergarten. They were asked to recall the appearance of the classroom, the teacher's manner, their difficulties and their triumphs. They also discussed other important, though inadvertent learning, for example, their discovery that a teacher or a book could be wrong! All these instances concerning their education were to be entered into their journals. Afterwards they could write essays based on these entries, developing them as informal, even anecdotal accounts, or as more formal essays, in which they extrapolated from their experiences to a more abstract level. For instance, a student who found that a book was in error, might discuss how errors are likely to be perpetuated by uncritical passive people, what the ramifications of such undiscriminating thinking could be in scientific research or in political life. As a teacher I worked with each student individually, and in a group, watching them learn how to see, examine, and draw inferences from their own lives and surroundings.

I have also used material from the students' environments as the basis for research papers, hoping thereby to avoid the dangers of plagiarism which arise when secondary sources are heavily employed. For example, students were asked to examine magazine advertising: The types of products commonly advertised in a given magazine; the audience to which they were directed; the kinds of photography and artwork used; the length of the messages; the kinds of sentences and grammatical usage in the ads, and so forth. A portrait of the typical reader of the magazine could be drawn from the kinds of ads included—the income level, sex, age, and interests. In other words, once the data was collected, some structure was imposed, the material was organized, and interesting results appeared. Generally I've found that there is greater enthusiasm to work on assignments when the students could use familiar material in their environment as a basis for the work.

As you can see, through my work with students, my overriding goal has been to develop a sensitivity and awareness of their environment, whether their assignments emphasized their perceptions of the physical world or dealt with their language and culture. I've also been interested to see that many of the exercises and general assignments could be carried out by younger students who seemed to thrive on journal writing and through this method developed a facility in writing, which they retained.

*Yakira Frank*
*University of Connecticut*
*Letter to Networks*

Sociologists believe that snapshots represent a kind of folk art which conveys self-conscious revelations about people and their values. With this in mind, find a snapshot of *yourself* from your recent or not-so-recent past which holds some special meaning for you with regards to the formation of your values. It might depict an aspect of your life which you recognize as especially important to you (a hobby, a sport, a particular vacation); it might capture a pivotal moment in your past in which you learned something about yourself or your world or made an important stride; it might show you with another person or people who have influenced you significantly. Whatever you choose, make sure that your snapshot has enough real meaning for you so that you can analyze it with interest. DO NOT simply take a snapshot of yourself now; this is an exercise in reflection on the past and what has shaped your personality, your "growing up."

Using the four-part essay form, follow these steps:

> Paragraph #1 - Introduce the meaning the picture has for you. This meaning is your thesis; summarize it and state it in one or two sentences; it will dictate your entire essay.
>
> Paragraph #2 - Describe OBJECTIVELY those details of the snapshot that are important to the observor's understanding of its meaning. Remember: you are describing what is seen on the surface of the snapshot, calling attention to physical details that relate to the snapshot's meaning. In other words, you are selecting details for the viewer to note.

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Paragraph #3 - Describe/discuss what is NOT SEEN by the viewer but important for the viewer's understanding of the snapshot's meaning, for example, the situations or events surrounding it, the person taking it, what you are feeling but not showing.

Paragraph #4 - Conclude with an analysis of the meaning for your present life the snapshot holds. The details of paragraphs 2 and 3 will have led directly to it so that the final paragraph will be a natural outgrowth. Here you are explaining your reactions to the snapshot after having reflected on it. You will have looked back—via the snapshot—on a significant moment in the past when you were experiencing something that helped shape your life in the present.

BE SURE TO ATTACH THE SNAPSHOT TO YOUR PAPER!

*Paula Beck*
*Nassau Community College*
*Letter to Networks*

The English Composition Board assigns a variety of topics for the writing assessment essay. The shared characteristic of the topics is that all required papers force the students to write with a point of view. This is useful because it shows the students' ability to organize and express themselves. Here is one assignment used by the ECB.

*Write a letter to the parents of a six-year-old boy or girl advising them to establish a particular policy of television watching for their child. Explain to them why you advocate such a policy.*

*Begin your letter with the following sentence:*

> *By the time the average person in North America graduates from high school, she or he will have seen 18,000 hours of television.*

*Now select one of the following as your second sentence:*

> *A. According to a well-known critic, through TV the present generation will have been given "an extraordinary exposure to standard adult English and opportunities to see many things."*
>
> *B. Since real experience is the primary source of learning, our children are growing up addicted to television and ignorant of life.*
>
> *C. Dr. Edward Palmer, head of research at Sesame Street, writes: "I think that watching television is a rather remarkable act in itself. All the while kids are watching, they're...actively relating what they're seeing to their own lives."*

*Now complete an essay developing the idea that follows from the first* *two sentences. Do your best to make your argument convincing to the parents who are your readers.*

Each essay is read by two experienced teachers of English composition. When the readers do not agree on the students' level of writing, a third Board reader makes the decision. The ECB reader's program helps insure uniformity in assessment. Of the nearly 4,000 papers read, only 244 needed a third opinion.

*Barbara Morris*
*University of Michigan*
*"Making the Essay Assignment"*

Texts. The following text and reference materials are required for English 101 and 102, Thought and Expression I and II:

E.P.J. Corbett, *The Little English Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Wiley) Lewis Thomas, *Lives of a Cell;* social science reprints from *Scientific American* ("Problem Solving," "The Visual Image," "The Acquisition of Language," "The Reward System of the Brain," "Slavery in Ants," and "Eyewitness Testimony"); Robert Gorham Davis, *Ten Modern Masters* or alternate short story anthology; Giraudoux, *Madwoman of Chaillot.*

A standard college dictionary, Beaver College Style Sheet, and Library Workbook.

Instructors may require additional readings for special purposes such as guest poet, theatre trip, or library project.

*Basic Writing.* Some students take English 100 as a prelude to the standard college composition sequence. In English 100, students learn how writers work. As they become increasingly comfortable with the writing process, they simultaneously develop organizational and sentence skills. They are led through increasingly more sophisticated paragraph modes (expressive, descriptive, narrative, illustrative). Then, their paragraphs are allowed to develop naturally into esays of the type they will write in English 101 and their other courses. At the same time, they are taught important summary skills, together with other effective reading and studying techniques. The texts are *The Random House Guide to Basic Writing* and *The Writer's Options.*

*Special Writing Objectives.* In all courses students write regularly each week in a supervised, on-going process of pre-writing, first draft, revised *drafts*, final editing, and final product. The student must select and submit two finished papers for *evaluation* before midterm and two additional finished papers for *evaluation* by the end of the term. But grades are based upon the consistency and quality of weekly performance as well as final products. Lecturing is minimized; short conferences, in-class writing, peer evaluation, and small-group tutorials are emphasized in a supervised, workshop situation conducive to mutual respect and positive criticism. Reading assignments are also minimized and integrated with writing projects. In learning library and research procedures, students may coordinate some assignments with requirements of other courses, including course clusters. They should also make use of the Writing Center.

*Requirements for En. 101.* In English 101 the instructor will stress basic problems and conventions of writing: review the contents of the *Handbook*, explain the writing process, discuss and practice inventive techniques and heuristic devices of composition, supervise students in generating and organizing and translating ideas into language, and assist students in their editing and proofreading problems (e.g., use Corbett correction numbers and symbols; provide grammatical, sentence-combining, or other exercises if needed). The instructor will discuss some special strategies for organizing and developing topics for which students have adequate knowledge or information: theme or thesis statement, paragraph development, audience or reader-based prose, use of rhetorical modes, advantages and limitations of outlining, transitional devices, and others. The attached table, Priorities of Choice and Convention in the Writing Process, exemplifies complexities and problem-solving techniques involved in effective writing.

The instructor must provide clear, well-defined writing assignments and supervise the revision process of major papers submitted for evaluation. Additional writing assignments will include at least one paraphrase and some use of library materials. The Library Workbook must be completed, and students must master documentation, acknowledgment, and the conventions of footnoting and bibliography. Instructors may require a journal and will insist on some practice in narration, description, definition, and analysis during the term.

*Requirements for En. 102.* In English 102 each instructor will choose a special theme for the course, but writing projects still have priority. The *Handbook* and multi-disciplinary readings are again required. Short stories, plays, or poems are sparsely used and well integrated: as stimulus for ideas or topics; as examples of effective writing, thematic focus and development, structure, command of language, and other details. The syllabus may provide four three-week units (organized under sub-topics of the main theme of the course) with finished papers due at the end of the third and sixth week of each half term (seventh week used for revising and submitting two finished papers for evaluation). First drafts should be well underway the first week, evaluated in individual or group conferences, and regularly supervised. There should be additional writing exercises, in class and out; at least one major paper must cover skills of library research and may be coordinated with other courses. Complex rhetorical modes such as comparison and contrast and argumentation may be covered. Though choices rather than conventions of the writing process need to be stressed at this point, students are accountable for clear, concise writing and standard usage.

*Common Experiences for the Fall Term.* Common experience requirements for the fall term include the poet Daniel Hoffman, October 10; the production of Giraudoux, *Madwoman of Chaillot*, by Theatre Playshop, October 17-21; and a film classic. Strongly recommended are films of Synge, *Playboy of the Western World*, November 6, and Williams, *Streetcar Named Desire*, November 19, and Playshop production of *Fantasticks*, November 28-December 2.

*Common Experiences for the Spring Term.* These will be announced later but should include the Theatre Playshop production in February and a special Shakespeare program in late April.

*Supplementary texts in Bookstore.* The following are available for special needs:

Mary S. Lawrence. *Reading, Thinking, Writing* (1975) (A text for students of English as a second language).
Patricia M. Fergus. *Spelling Improvement: A Program for Self Instruction,* 3rd edition (1978);
James J. Brown and Thomas E. Pearsall. *Better Spelling; Fourteen Steps to Spelling Improvement* (1978) (For students with spelling problems).
Donald A. Daiker et al. *The Writer's Options* (1979);
Frank O'Hare. *Sentencecraft* (1975) (For students who need help with sentence variety.)
William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style,* 3rd edition (1979) (For an overview of standard stylistic principles).

*Course Prospectus*
*Elaine Maimon*
*Beaver College*

*Priorities of Choice and Convention in the Writing Process*

| Choices | |
|---|---|
| Thematic Focus and Ideas | Choose subject, modes of discourse, and thematic design for generating and organizing ideas; integrate details or examples from observation, reading, or other sources of knowledge. |
| Rhetorical Aims and Attitudes | Have specific readers or audience in mind and their expectations regarding the subject and writer; maintain a consistent point of view, tone, and style. |
| Genre or Type of Writing Project | Determine the kind of writing required for the subject, circumstances, and audience; complexities may range from a simple personal note to intricacies of artistic form such as short story or sonnet. |
| Structural Format and Coherence | Use transitional devices, paragraphing, subsections, subheads, typeface, or other reader-based structural devices, composition components, and manuscript conventions. |
| Syntax | Maintain logical word order, grammatical structure, coordination, subordination, and effective closure of independent or sentence units. |
| Diction | Choose words that convey meaning and style accurately and effectively; keep a standard college dictionary handy. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Standard Written English | Use the dialect and conventions of standard written discourse as distinguished from idiom or irregular patterns of speech. |
| Spelling and Punctuation | Use Standard orthography and conventional graphic devices of mechanics and punctuation; do not neglect final editing. |
| Copying and Proofreading | Use legible handwriting or accurate typing, the motor skills of written composition, and proofread the final draft or copy for scribal errors. |

Conventions

## INTRODUCTORY UNIT

- Books and Materials
- Mechanics
- Grading
- Bi-weekly Schedules
- Introductory Assignments

- Course Components
    - Journal
    - The Reading Process
    - Vocabulary
    - Language Practice
    - The Nature of Discourse
    - The Writing Process

## UNIT Ia: Writing about a Scene

- Reading
- Language Practice
- Writing
    - Starting Point
    - Exploration (Particle)
    - Insight
    - Focus
    - Audience, Aim, Mode
    - Drafting the Paper
- Focus in the Paragraph & Sentence
- Exercises
- Sentence Combining

## UNIT Ib: Writing about a Scene, Version II

- Reading
- Language Practice

- Writing
    - Exploration (Wave)
    - Critiquing
    - Revising
- Basic Sentence Patterns
- Writing Sentences in Basic Sentence Patterns
    - Predication
    - Sentence Combining

UNIT IIa: Writing about a Person

- Reading
- Language Practice
- Writing
    - Exploration (Field)
    - Focus, Audience, Aim, Mode
    - Drafting the Paper
- Verbals
- Exercise on Verbals
- Exercise: Identifying Sentence Patterns in Sentences with Verbal Phrases
- Sentence Combining

UNIT IIb: Writing about a Person, Version Two

- Reading & Vocabulary
- Language Practice
- Writing
    - Exercise: Illogical Sentences
    - Adjective Clauses
    - Sentence Combining

UNIT IIIa: Writing about an Experience

- Reading & Vocabulary
- Language Practice
- Writing
    - Starting Point and Exploration
    - Focus, Aim, Audience, Mode
    - Writing the Paper
- Sample Exploration of an Experience
- Adverb Clauses
- Exercise on Adverb Clauses
- Exercise on Dangling Modifiers
- Sentence Combining

UNIT IIIb: Writing about an Experience, Version Two

- Reading & Vocabulary

- Language Practice
- Writing
- Organizing and Developing the Paper
- Joining, Combining and Relating Sentences Chart
- Joining and Punctuation Patterns
    - Exercise: Joining and Relating
    - Exercise: Joining, Relating and Combining

UNIT IVa: Writing about an Activity

- Joining: Parallel Structure
- Exercises on Parallel Structure
- Joining: Correlatives
- Exercises on Correlatives
- Sentence Combining
- Reading: Moteling

UNIT IVb: Writing about an Activity, Version Two
- Reading
- Language Practice
- Writing
- Joining Related Ideas
- Comma Sense
- Exercise: Punctuation
- Exercise: Series Transformations; More Exercises on Joining
- Reading: To Dispel Fears of Live Burial

UNIT Va: Writing about a Human Characteristic
- Reading
- Language Practice
- Writing: Writing an Extended Definition
- Sentence Development
- Exercise: Sentence Development-I
- Reading: Luck, Loneliness, Migraine

UNIT Vb: Writing about a Human Characteristic, Version Two

- Reading and Vocabulary
- Language Practice
- Writing
- More Help with Revising
- Sentence Development Exercises-II
- Developing the Paragraph
- Exercise: Paragraph Structure

UNIT VIa: Writing a Persuasive Letter

- Reading and Vocabulary

Language Practice
Writing
    The Persuasive Aim
    Audience Strategies in Persuasive Writing
    Developing a Persuasive Argument
Exercise: Logic Pyramids
Exercise: Scrambled Paragraphs
Exercise: Paragraph Development-II
Reading: An Open Letter to Freshmen Women

The Basic Writing Skills course consists of a number of components carefully and rigorously designed both to insure comprehension and retention and to provide beginning writers with techniques for generating materials, for synthesizing and developing thoughts. Beginning writers can be characterized as those whose reading, writing and study skills are markedly deficient: they are students who do not have ready access to written material or, indeed, to their own experience. Hence, they require assistance in reading as well as training in making something of their own experiences and thoughts. The curriculum provides this assistance and training at the same time that it works in a non-mechanical fashion with problems in grammar and syntax.

The curriculum consists of the following components:

1. Curriculum Units—explain the assignment fully, so classroom discussion of assignments and skills reinforces and repeats lessons of the units.

2. Journal—students keep a journal (not a diary of the day's events) in which they write for 10 minutes non-stop 3 times a week. Journals are not graded; they are used to provide students a non-threatening opportunity to think through in detail and in written form a problem, experience, etc.

3. Reading and Study Process—this was designed by a learning psychologist to assist students become more active and intelligent in their reading. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between generalizations and specific supporting detail.

4. Writing—writing experiences are organized into 2-week units: 1st week focusses on the prewriting process and the production of a first draft: the second week culminates in an informed revision. This component of the course is sequential, moving the student from simple description to narration, classification, analysis, and persuasion. The topics are listed on the Contents Sheet. The Writing Process includes a number of elements:

    a. The use of models—students do Reading and Study Sheets on essays in *The Reading Commitment* by Adelstein and Pival. These essays are matched to the writing assignments and provide models.

b. Discussion in the units of the writing assignments' goals and possible strategies.

c. Generative Model: the exploration—at the beginning of each unit, students produce an exploration of their subject, the structure of which is based on a simplified version of the Becker, Pike and Young tagmemic model.

Students produce an exploration in which they systematically examine their subject from different perspectives: as a particle, as a wave, and as a field.

This is the most dramatic and in some ways the most crucial component of the course, for the students who produces a fully developed exploration, employing the three perspectives, is the student who writes a richly textured, interesting paper.

The result of the exploration is a series of insights in answer to a starting-point question about the subject. Synthesizing, the student produces an elaborated focus statement which is the skeleton for a complete paper.

Finally, students are required to consider the audience they wish to address and effective strategies for addressing that audience. This is extremely difficult but also crucial for teaching the students the difference between themselves and their audience, themselves and their subject matter.

d. Once students have written the first versions, which they ditto for general distribution, they meet in small critiquing groups. Each session is governed by a concern for the rhetorical tasks of the unit (and of preceding units). Thus, for example, in the first unit, students are learning to develop and adhere to the focus of their paper, to use personal and concrete subjects, active verbs, and vivid, sensuous language. This is what they critique in one another's papers, reinforcing their own sense of what all this means, and also learning important lessons about audience.

The instructor evaluates student papers at length, using tape cassettes, a procedure which we have found extraordinarily effective in writing courses.

e. Each week the student completes a grammar unit which is right in the Curriculum Unit. Each of these is based on the establishing of conceptual relationships among ideas. There seems to be little doubt that conceptualization and articulation in writing are mutually generative, so we believe this work to improve cognitive skills. Over the term, the students learn a variety of sentence combining (and generating) skills which enable them to establish relationships among ideas (subordination, coordination, chronology, types of modification, etc.) This work is supported by the individualized instruction drill provided by the Blumenthals, a sort of drill for which we cannot spare classroom time.

f. Finally, all this work is supported by the tutors (ideally, each student in 103 is assigned a tutor) who work with a student 2-3 hours a week for each student, going closely over all assignments, providing instructors with essential assistance and students with both extra contact hours and peer models.

*1. The Journal*

Often beginning writers have a hard time simply getting words onto paper, yet each of us speaks at least 5000 words daily! This part of the course work is *intended to increase your facility, to get words flowing from your head to the paper* in front of you. However, a journal, as we define it here, is *not* to be confused with a diary. The journal can be thought of as a record of the mind to distinguish it from the diary, which is a record of what a person does. The journal is a way of recording *not* what you did during any given day, hour after hour, *but what you thought and felt* about an event, person or experience. Further, it is intended to help you realize hwo much you have already observed and experienced. Writing in the journal will help you recognize those events or experiences which trouble you, those you want to change, those you enjoy.

Because the journal writing is intended to enable you to enhance your self-knowledge through self-expression as well as your ability to communicate effectively, I will not grade the journals, so don't worry about style, content, organization, mechanics, or spelling. Just write.

In your journal writing you are to write at least three times weekly. Each session *is to consist of ten minutes of nonstop* writing—once you begin to write, do not stop until the ten minutes are up. If you can't think of anything to write, then simply write "I can't thing of anything to write" over and over until something comes to you. The goal is to cover the sheet of paper with words.

Use your journal as a means of exploration—to learn more about yourself. In writing discourse, you will try to build bridges from your own world and experience to that of someone else, bridges across which you can share. But before you can begin to build the bridge you must know your terrain. Use your journal as a place to chart the contours of your own inner world. Here are some ideas:

a. Discover your own personal "key" words—words that are especially important for you, that conjure up special feelings or visions; write them down and then "free associate" to them on paper; write whatever comes into your head. (For example, one of my key words is "golden"; another is "resonance", and yet another is "forest.")
b. Pay attention to what you notice during a given day, to what attracts your attention. Close your eyes and visualize the day's sights, sounds, smells—not necessarily in any order. What images pop into your mind's eye immediately? Try to descibe them on paper, and then think (also on paper) about why you remembered *those* images and not the thousands of others that you also must have registered

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during this one day. On the day that I'm writing this, my images would include: the green green trees dripping with fog, mist, and rain near the Summer Theatre at SPAC; the smell of must inside the theatre; the surprise of the stars overhead later this evening, their brilliance and clarity after the cloudy skies earlier; mist on the bathroom mirror and window after my shower this morning; bluebirds splashing and bathing in the puddles on the black plastic sheets in my garden out in the back yard; and so on. I could write an entire entry about any one of those images.

c. a memory of a horrible (or wonderful) childhood experience.
d. explain what you like most (least) about yourself and why.
e. describe one of your dreams.
f. a fantasy about what you'd like to be doing with your life ten years from now.
g. describe an imaginary conversation you wish you could have with your mother (father, sister).
h. describe a conversation you wish you could have had with yourself as you were 5 years ago; 10 years ago.
i. discuss your pet gripe.
j. find a photograph that intrigues you and write a meditation or story about it.
k. use your imagination; the world is full of fascinating people, places, things, events, ideas—all of them potential subjects for a piece of writing.
l. use the journal to "bi-sociate"; shuffle your entry sheets and then read them in this new order. See what kinds of connections you can make between entries, what new ideas suggest themselves to you as a result of your scrambling up usual orders of experience. For instance, what kind of connection could I make between "golden" and steam on my bathroom mirror?

While the journal writing can include many things, you should bear in mind the subjects of the papers you will be writing for the course. For example, Unit 1 is concerned with physical description, with a significant environment, with the use of vivid and concrete language. Directing your journal writing toward descriptions of significant environments will assist you in the more formal writing assignments.

Here are some suggestions for the first few journal assignments, keyed to Unit 1:

a. a description of a room of yours and what you liked or disliked about it.
b. your parents' room and what you like or disliked about it.
c. a landscape that you felt was significant in some way.
d. a city or town in another part of the country or the world which attracted or repelled or bothered you.
e. a market place
f. a theatre.
g. a men's or women's room (at a gas station?).

h. a room in a hotel.
the inside of a special car.
j. a dining hall.
k. a bookstore or library.
l. an art gallery or museum.
m. what you know is behind a particular wall, door, window, partition.
n. an insturctor's office.
o. a principal's office.
p. the doctor's or dentist's office.
q. objects—for instance, an orange, a glass, a cup, a toilet bowl, a mirror, a toothbrush, a canteloupe.

*Janice Hays & Charlotte Goodman*
*Skidmore College*
*English 103: Curriculum Contents*

The Writing Workshop, staffed by five members of the English Composition Board, provides professional help in writing to students. This assistance is more accurately described as developmental rather than remedial. The emphasis upon developmental attention to writing derives from our recognition of three uniquely different, though inter-related, stages in the writing process: *composing, shaping, editing.*

By contrast, remedial programs concentrate upon developing motivation to write and seeking strategies to create topics out of the writer's experience. Writing skills laboratories are also different from the Workshop because they usually focus upon programmed materials and practice exercises which provide rhetorical situations, purposes, and audiences for the writer.

While the Writing Workshop at Michigan addresses a broad range of student writing problems, students know when they come to the Workshop what their writing task is. The Workshop has three special advantages: attention to papers is wholly individualized, all student writing reviewed in the Workshop consists of responses to assignments already given in College courses, and students come voluntarily. Since the Workshop serves students who are already motivated to work on their writing, instructors believe that their primary task is to help students gain access to their own ideas about real writing tasks.

In some cases, because assignments are unclear, students are uncomfortable pursuing any particular response. Analysis, questioning, and dialogue help students to trust their own approaches to a topic and lead them to present their ideas confidently. Once direction and purpose are identified, students are helped with the formulation of an appropriate context for their ideas. This is a process of shaping large structures and then giving attention to smaller units, but always beginning with the essay as a whole before proceeding to deal with phrases and sentences.

Many student writers have not learned how to build bridges between writer and reader. The Workshop emphasizes early awareness of audience, building upon the practice of College classrooms which employ regular small group work that requires students to attend to each other's writing: reading aloud, encouraging discussion, developing revisions.

Next, attention is focussed on how process leads to product. Students frequently believe that writing ought to come out right the first time; if they can be convinced that a first draft is good practice, meaning can at first take precedence over form. The result of the first draft can then be a clearer, fuller expression of the thesis.

Editing is the third and final stage of Workshop assistance to the student in readying written thought for others. Attention is concentrated upon conventions of Standard English as students are trained to recognize and correct their own errors with Workshop guidance. Identifying the error in context, the student is encouraged to understand its probable source and application to other situations.

*English Composition Board Writing Workshop*
*University of Michigan*
*Barbara Dougherty*

# FOOTNOTES

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2. Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10. This is a seminal text for teachers of composition to basic writing students, whether native speakers or ESL.

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4. Larry Selinker, Interlanguage, *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10 (1972), 209-31.

5. David M. Davidson, Sentence Combining in an ESL Writing Program, *Journal of Basic Writing* 1 (Spring/Summer 1977), 61.

6. For example, Gloria Gallingane and Donald Byrd, *Write Away* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1977).

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8. Ann Raimes, *Focus on Composition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 64.

9. Donald Knapp, A Focused, Efficient Method to Relate Composition Correction to Teaching Aims, in *Teaching English as a Second Language*, ed. Harold B. Allen (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 271-80.

10. Michael C. Whitbeck, Peer Correction Procedures for Intermediate and Advanced ESL Composition Learners, *TESOL Quarterly* 10 (Sept. 1976), 321-26.

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